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STRATHERN;

OR

LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise,
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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STRATHERN.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The man with feelings gen'rous, noble, true,
Who enters life ere by experience taught,
Will find, unless he prudence keeps in view,
His worldly wisdom will be dearly bought.
False friends will seek him only for his pelf,
And mock the weakness which they profit by;
While he who serves them thinks not of himself,
Nor sees the snares that in his pathway lie.
Temptations court him upon ev'ry side:
He scatters gold with open, lavish hand,
'Till good men pity and the bad deride,
And ruin comes. Then fly the sordid band
To whom his wealth he ever did extend,
For now they know he aid no more can lend.

The surveyor employed by Mr. Papworth to examine and give a valuation of the building and decorations of Strathern House, and an estimate of the sum that would be required for its completion, sent in his

report, and the difference between it and the account of Mr. Drinkwater, although amounting to some six or seven thousand pounds, did not tend to console Strathern for the past extravagance, or the future expenditure indispensable for terminating the mansion. Mr. Drinkwater, offended at the implied doubt of his probity, proved, by having a surveyor called in to examine the building, now unceremoniously pressed for the payment of his account, to meet which, Strathern must sell out of the funds at a fearful loss, they having fallen very low just at that period. Those only with proud minds, and who, for the first time, have experienced a want of money, can imagine the mortification of Strathern at the pressing and somewhat peremptory style of Mr. Drinkwater's demands for payment.

"This person must be paid forthwith, at whatever loss to myself," said he to Mr. Papworth; "for I cannot allow him to continue writing such letters as these," handing two to his solicitor, who ran his eyes over them carelessly, without showing any symptoms of surprise or anger at what had so greatly annoyed his client.

"To sell out of the funds at this crisis would be little short of madness," said he, "and must not be thought of. We can baffle this fellow for several months, before the termination of which time the

funds will be up again, and then you can sell out without a loss, and pay him."

"And during the time for which you propose delaying the payments, I am to be subjected to a repetition of these insolent letters," said Strathern, pointing to the epistle of Drinkwater, lying on the table.

"A trifling annoyance, in my opinion, sir, when compared with the heavy loss to be sustained by selling out of the funds at present."

"Nevertheless, I am determined on taking this step, and immediately getting rid of Mr. Drinkwater."

"You will, of course, do as you please, sir; but if my advice is to be followed, and you will permit me to say that, in this case, it ought to be adopted, you would do no such thing. If you are determined on paying this man, who, had I been consulted, never could have had the power of acting as he has done, it would be better to raise, by loan, a sum sufficient to settle his demand."

Though averse to borrowing, Strathern consented, for the nonce, to be guided by Mr. Papworth, and that gentleman pledging himself that the loan could be effected in a very short time, his client left the office in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

On returning to his hotel, he found a letter from Lord Francis Musgrove, an old college friend, whom he had not seen for some years, requesting a loan of

six thousand pounds for a few months, or, if that were inconvenient, asking him to join him in security for raising that sum.

Strathern remembered the writer of the note, a fine, manly, frank, and generous youth, ready to help his companions on every emergency, and endeared to them all by innumerable acts of kindness. He had seen little of him since they had left college, for Lord Francis Musgrove had soon after set out on his travels to the East, whence he had returned shortly after Strathern left England, yet he felt that he could not refuse the request made in such perfect confidence on their former friendship; and, though he acknowledged to himself that never could an application for a loan be more ill-timed, he nevertheless promptly determined on granting it. He was about to write a cheque for the sum required, when he recollected that it was first necessary to ascertain whether the money ordered to be lodged at his bankers' had yet been received there. He determined to call on them and inquire, and he took up his hat to depart, when Lord Francis Musgrove was announced.

After the first greetings were over, Lord Francis said, "You have got my note, I suppose? The truth is, my dear Strathern, my want of the six thousand I named is so pressing, that I came to urge you to lend it to me. It is so long since we met, that I was afraid

you would have forgotten me, and remembering the old adage, 'Out of sight out of mind,' I determined on personally renewing my request."

"Be assured I was not unmindful of it," replied Strathern; "the fact is, I was on the point of going to my bankers,' to see whether or not my cash account with them would enable me to assist you, without overdrawing them."

"A thousand thanks, my good fellow. Just like you. But suppose, instead of drawing out your money from your bankers, you accept a bill at three months for me, which I shall lodge the cash for before it becomes due."

"Just as you like," replied Strathern, not sorry at that moment to be spared the necessity of drawing so large a sum from his bankers.

"I have brought a stamp with me," said Lord Francis Musgrove, taking out of his pocket a neat note-case, from which he subtracted the said stamp. "There is nothing," added he, "like being prepared for an emergency." He drew the bill, Strathern accepted it, and Lord Francis replaced it in his note-case, saying, "A thousand thanks, my dear fellow. I must now be off, but I will call on you soon again. Where do you dine? Suppose we settle to have a late dinner whenever you choose?"

"Not to-day, for I have some business that will occupy me until late."

"Hang business?—treat it as I do, with sovereign contempt."

"That would be foolish," observed Strathern, gravely; and the thought crossed his mind that the bill he had just been asked to sign was the result of his friend's system. There was a carelessness and flippancy in Lord Francis Musgrove's manner that did not please his old schoolfellow, and which, on an occasion like the present, always a painful and embarrassing one to any man of feeling or delicacy, struck him as being peculiarly misplaced. Perhaps some symptom of what was passing in his mind was revealed in his countenance, for Lord Francis, having glanced at him, exclaimed, "Why, by Jove, my dear Strathern, you look as solemn as a judge about to pronounce sentence of death on some unhappy delinquent. I must be off instantly, for, were I to remain ten minutes longer with you, I should become infected with the blue devils. *Addio!* we shall meet soon again, but, *en attendant*, my good fellow, if you don't wish to scare every man and woman that you meet, put off that saturnine expression and reassume your natural one;" and off went the thoughtless young man, leaving Strathern doubtful whether he had not acted foolishly in accepting the bill for six thousand pounds.

"Yet how could I avoid it?" thought he to himself. "We were such good friends at school and at college, that he naturally thought he had some right

to call on me for assistance, and it would be really painful to me to refuse. I had, however, much more satisfaction in helping poor Olliphant. *He* my aid may place in a position to achieve a moderate independence for himself far from the scenes and companions of his former follies; while Musgrove—but hold, let me not do as I have been told all lenders of money to friends do, become the severest censors of their errors, thinking that their having assisted them gives a right to be severe. I remember the time when I was wont to admire the reckless generosity of Musgrove, yet, no sooner does he call on me to relieve him from its consequences, than I find myself disposed to judge him harshly."

And now Strathern's arrival in London having been announced in the columns of the *Morning Post*, that chronicle of fashion, and copied into the *Court Journal*, the pages of which serve as a reference for all the movements and whereabouts of the *élite* of the aristocracy, visiting cards, and invitation ones, came pouring in, not only daily but hourly; and, had Strathern accepted only one quarter of the engagements proposed to him, he would have scarcely left himself breathing time, so rapid and multiplied was their succession. While he sat meditating on the rage for pleasure which seems to actuate the gay world in London during *the season*, as the spring and two first

summer months are emphatically styled, Mr. Sudley Seymour, the fastidious and acknowledged arbiter of fashion and elegance, came to pay him a visit.

"You see before you a man literally worn out by what are called the pleasures of society," said that gentleman, sinking into an easy chair. "Were I only to describe to you the routine of one day, you would wonder that I am alive. Yesterday, *par exemple*, I attended a *déjeûner dansant*, one of the most trying ordeals to female beauty, as it decidedly is to male propriety of costume, for a poor devil is obliged to rack his brains, and eschew the counsel of his tailor, in order not to appear ridiculous at them. A man must not look as if he were going to his banker's in the City, or to the House of Commons, where, to show himself well dressed, would draw on him the vulgar and obsolete term of dandy, and yet he must avoid the regular evening dress. You can't imagine how ill the young women looked, flushed and heated from dancing, while the sun ogled them much more warmly than their attendant *beaux*; and matured matrons, for — Heaven be praised! — there is now no such thing as *old* women, plainly betrayed in broad daylight secrets only guessed at when they are seen by the more propitious illumination of wax candles, namely, their attempts to conceal the ravages of the ruthless destroyer—Time. Yes, *déjeûners dansants*

are very trying to the fair sex, and many a conquest achieved on a previous night in a ball-room has been lost when the garish sun has exposed freckles and flushings, from which even the finest complexions are rarely exempt. Then the *toilette* for these anomalous *fêtes* requires such tact and good taste in the choice, that it is only a Parisian *élégante* of the first fashion that can be said to truly comprehend, and be able to command perfect success in it. I have attentively studied those matters, and have decided that robes of snowy hue, light as gossamer, and falling into graceful folds, not so long as to soil their hems by a contact with a dewy lawn, or so short as to reveal more than a very small foot, should be invariably selected on such occasions; and the fair wearers should take especial care to remember that these delicate robes are made to be danced *in*, and not sat *upon*, as an appearance of sedentary habits wholly destroys their effect. Diamonds and all brilliant gems should be carefully avoided, for, however fine their quality, they look meretricious and theatrical in daylight. The tender green of the emerald, dark cerulean tint of the sapphire, and lovely blue of the torquoise, entitle those stones to form the sole exception for figuring in the *toilette* of an *élégante* at a *déjeûner dansant*, but they are *not* to be encircled with brilliants. Flowers fresh —not from the garden, but from Constantin, at Paris,

must adorn the light, transparent bonnets, or peep from the glossy braids or ringlets beneath them of young beauties; but let those beware of removing their bonnets, lest dishevelled locks or floating hairs, escaped from their combs, give them more the air of *bacchantes* than of dancing nymphs. I should also observe," continued Mr. Sudley Seymour, "let not the chest, shoulders, or arms be bare, even though the time of congregating at these *fêtes* should be later than usual. One hour of daylight after dancing is perfidious to beauty, for the flushing invariably attendant on such exercise transforms even the loveliest into something approaching to coarseness for the time being."

Strathern, amused by the gravity with which his old acquaintance canvassed these points, and the importance he attached to them, rather encouraged than checked his volubility.

"Yes, my dear Strathern," resumed Mr. Sudley Seymour, "you, fresh from the continent, can form no notion of the figures the women make of themselves at these *déjeûners dansants*."

"And I remember this man an intelligent person, who gave the promise of distinguishing himself in public life," thought Strathern, as he reflected, after his old acquaintance had departed, on the subject that furnished the whole topic of his conversation during the visit. "To

find a man turning his thoughts to such frivolous and puerile matters, and disserting on female attire, as a *precieuse ridicule*, or man milliner might be supposed to do, is mortifying. If such are the results of a London life of pleasure, Heaven defend me from ever leading one."

The chagrin experienced by Strathern at the recent refusal of Mrs. Sydney and her fair daughter to renew the engagement with him, weighed so heavily on his mind that he felt an utter disinclination to enter into society. He accepted not a single invitation out of the numerous ones that were addressed to him, a line of conduct which, so far from producing the effect he desired and calculated on, namely, that of being in time forgotten by those givers of dinners, routs, balls, concerts, and *déjeûners dansants*, only served to render them more anxious to have his company. "*The rich*" Mr. Strathern, the exterior of whose splendid house attracted such general attention, must be indeed worth seeking by those who had daughters or sisters to dispose of in marriage. "*The rich*" Mr. Strathern, whom everybody heard of as buying the finest works of art and objects of *vertu* at Rome the preceding winter, must be an acquaintance worth knowing. Such a vast and magnificent house, to be stored with such treasures, could only be intended for one day being opened to the fashionable world by a series of

fêtes that would inevitably surpass all that had ever yet been given in London, and to secure invitations for which each and all of the coteries that compose the great world in our modern Babylon bestirred themselves by continuing to send him cards for theirs.

"This Mr. Strathern must be a most fastidious personage," said the Duchess of Ambleside to the Marchioness of Teviotdale, as these two leaders of fashion sat in the *boudoir* of the former. "He has not appeared anywhere since his arrival."

"I wonder what he is like," was the response. "Some women who met him at Rome assert that he is singularly good-looking; but all the men declare that he is only passable."

"But we know what that means, my dear duchess. The men, whatever people may say to the contrary, are infinitely more envious and jealous of each other's personal advantages than women are. I never heard a man admit that any of his contemporaries were handsome; *au contraire*, they one and all, with a *naïveté* that is quite amusing, begin to decry the looks of any man we think handsome; while we, who have infinitely more tact than these lords of the creation, as they consider themselves, never openly attack the beauties *they* praise—nay, more, we affect to abound in their sense, and lavish exaggerated commendations,

often wholly at variance with our real opinions, on the women they admire."

"Then you are disposed to think that this *beau solitaire* is handsome?"

"Decidedly; otherwise the men would not deny it with such *acharnement*."

"I heard something about his being engaged to marry some young heiress at Rome, with whom, it is said, he was desperately smitten, and that their engagement was broken off, no one could tell why."

"And some one told me that he, having discovered some slight levity in her conduct at a *bal masque*, and having ventured a reproof more severe than the lady thought was merited, she broke with him."

"The Countess of Allancourt," said the groom of the chamber, throwing open the door, and that lady entered the boudoir, all smiles and amiability.

"We were talking of Mr. Strathern," said the duchess. "Do you happen to know him?"

"Oh! yes; I know every one," replied Lady Allancourt, who affected to have even a more extensive acquaintance than she really had, although hers was a numerous one. "He is immensely rich, very handsome, clever—but rather eccentric; and hates society—that is, good society. With another class, he is said not to be so unsociable."

"How dreadful!"

"Yes; it is quite horrid."

"Mr. Rhymer told me," said the duchess, "that some young lady to whom Mr. Strathern was engaged discovered this fact, and broke with him in consequence. He mentioned the name, but I have forgotten it. One never remembers names in London. There is such a continual round of gaieties going on that one forgets everything."

"I assure you, my dear duchess, that the rupture originated quite in a different cause," observed Lady Allancourt, assuming an air of increased importance from the consciousness of knowing more respecting Strathern than the other ladies did.

"Pray tell us," said the marchioness; "I long to hear all about this *beau solitaire*."

"The fact is, that the young lady to whom Mr. Strathern was engaged passed herself off as an heiress of great wealth. Her name is Sydenham, or something like it, and her mother, a very artful, designing woman, tried to persuade Mr. Strathern to marry her at Rome, and postpone having the settlement drawn until they came to England. This proposition very naturally excited his suspicion, and he refused compliance with it. Nay, more, like a wise man, he wrote home for information, and discovered the imposition attempted to be practised on him. The result

was, he at once broke off the engagement, and left the female fortune-hunters very angry at their disappointment."

"Then it would appear that Mr. Strathern was no less influenced by mercenary motives," observed the duchess, her ingenuous countenance betraying her altered opinion of him.

"*Que voulez vous?* Men are now so prudent."

"Selfish should be the word. This *beau solitaire* has now lost all interest for me," said the duchess.

"But you wouldn't have him marry one who deceived him into the belief of her being rich, when she was otherwise?" demanded the worldly-minded Lady Allancourt.

"I would not have him seek a woman only because he believed her to be rich," replied the duchess.

"I had fancied him quite a Byron sort of looking creature, with a high, pale forehead, melancholy eyes, a scornful mouth, opening to show very fine teeth, and that indescribable air that always distinguishes a man of genius from all others," said the romantic Marchioness of Teviotdale, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"I never heard any one attribute genius to the gentleman in question," observed Lady Allancourt. "He has never written anything, at least, never published."

"Persons may have genius without having ever

published anything," said the marchioness, her thoughts recurring at that moment to certain stanzas in her album, indited by her own fair hand, and which she firmly believed to be instinct with the divine gift, the possession of which she had so gratuitously attributed to Strathern.

"He has been asked everywhere," proceeded the countess, "and will go to no one, lives on rice and iced water, his only luxuries being fruit and coffee. Reads the greater part of the night, and, in short, as I have been informed, leads the strangest life imaginable."

"Oh! what a delightful person he must be!" exclaimed the marchioness. "Who but a man of genius could so live? How I long to see him!"

"Genius has nothing to do in the affair, I assure you," said Lady Allancourt. "Mr. Strathern pursues this *regime* for the sole purpose of checking a predisposition to corpulency."

"Good heavens! he is not fat, I hope!" and the marchioness almost started from the *bergère* in which she was seated. "There is nothing so dreadful as a man who is fat."

"I am afraid, if the truth must be told, he *is* fat, and somewhat more red in the face than could be wished," replied Lady Allancourt, who happened never to have seen the person she described, or even

to have heard a description of him; but such is often the way in which persons are painted by those who affect to know, but have never seen them. The seclusion in which Strathern lived, and which the state of his feelings under the disappointment of his heart prompted, rendered him an object of more curiosity, and, consequently, of more interest, to the idlers of fashion than he would have been had he daily formed one in the numerous *fêtes* and amusements going on. Persons flocked in crowds to view the exterior of his mansion, admittance to the interior being denied them; and its magnitude, with the costliness of its architectural decorations, impressing them with a high notion of the vast wealth of its owner, his name, to which was almost always prefixed "the wealthy," or "the rich," soon became common as household words in men's mouths—ay, and in women's too.

Great was the annoyance produced by this general belief in the vast wealth of Strathern; for not only was he assailed from morning till night by tradesmen soliciting him to view their choicest wares, and requesting to have the honour of entering his name in their books, but begging letters, setting forth, in the most plaintive terms that language could devise, all the miseries to which poverty is heir, came pouring in. To have read even half of these pathetic appeals to his charity would have taken up the whole time of

Strathern, and to have relieved them would have exhausted a much greater fortune than his, even before he had made the recent large breaches in it. Nevertheless, he could not peruse some of them without deeply commiserating the writers, and he sent his servant to ascertain the truth of the statements they contained, and to administer assistance.

But another, and a still greater annoyance resulted from the exaggerated reports of his wealth, for it led every acquaintance he had among his contemporaries to imagine that so vast a fortune could only have been confided to him for the purpose of extricating them from the difficulties into which their reckless extravagance had plunged them, or to enable them still longer to pursue their improvident career. The gratitude of Olliphant, too strong for him to conceal the generosity of his benefactor, soon made known the service which Strathern had, unsolicited, conferred on him, and encouraged a host of needy young men to count on similar kindness. Hence, friendly calls from importunate visitors, who *would not* be denied access to Strathern, generally terminated in requests for loans or acceptances to bills, made with such apparent confidence in his friendship, and reliance on his power to grant the favour they solicited, that he found himself, owing to his too great kindness of heart and generosity, involved to a large amount, and soon after

discovered that the sacrifices he had so unwisely made, in order to extricate these *soi-disant* friends, had been of only temporary use to them, while to him they held out the certain prospect of future heavy embarrassment. Shortly before he had become aware of this startling fact, Lord Francis Musgreve one morning entered his room.

"I am again come to ask your assistance, my dear fellow; but this I promise you, on my honour, shall be the last time. I am unexpectedly called on to pay four thousand pounds, for the settlement of which I thought I should have my own time. The man to whom I owed it has unfortunately died, and his plaguy executors are putting me to the utmost trouble and expense. In a very few weeks some arrangements I have now in hand for finally extricating myself from all my difficulties will be terminated; but, should my creditors get scent of this new affair, which they inevitably will if I do not at once satisfy these executors, all my arrangements will be knocked on the head, and I shall be a ruined man. Accept one more bill for me, my dear Strathern, for four thousand pounds. It will be the saving of me, indeed it will."

"This bill system is so repugnant to my notions and feelings!" said Strathern.

"I only proposed it, my dear fellow, to save you the necessity of drawing your money out of your

bankers' hands, or selling out of the funds at present when they are so devilish low ; but, if you can advance the four thousand, it would be better still."

Strathern knew that his account at his bankers was not just then in a very flourishing state, for the six thousand given to Olliphant, and some large payments made for groups of sculpture from Rome, had made great inroads into the dividends paid into his bankers. He therefore, after a few minutes' reflection, said, "Well, for this once, I will accept the bill for four thousand, but, on the express understanding that you pledge your word of honour that this, as well as the former one, will be honoured, and that you will not again ask me to sign."

"Agreed. I give you my word of honour, both bills shall be paid, and, while pledging myself never to repeat the request you have so kindly complied with, I assure you, my dear fellow, that I can never forget your friendship on this and a former occasion. I will draw the bill," and he took a stamp from his pocket-book, and began writing, while Strathern, conscious of having committed a new folly, and blaming himself for his weakness, signed it, and saw Lord Francis Musgrove depart in the highest spirits imaginable, humming a favourite air whilst he descended the stairs.

"If he should not be able to take up these bills, I

shall really be in a serious scrape," thought Strathern. "Ten thousand pounds," muttered he, and the sum never seemed to him half so important before, "is a very serious affair, and I cannot, with the other claims against me, afford to lose it just now, without being put to inconvenience."

The next day Strathern went to the office of Mr. Papworth, to inquire if the money to be borrowed to satisfy the demand of Mr. Drinkwater was ready.

"I have again been annoyed by him," said he, "and I therefore hope that the loan is ready."

"I am sorry to say that it is not," replied Mr. Papworth. "Loans are not so easily effected as gentlemen of fortune imagine. I thought I had found a person to lend me the sum required, but, after entertaining the proposition, and, as I believed, having assented to it, he has declared off, on the plea that he has discovered that bills with your signature have been offered for discount to all the Jews in London, and that for one of six thousand accepted by you, only two thousand five hundred could be obtained. This is most injurious to your credit, sir, and will militate most seriously against my effecting a loan for you on equitable terms. I doubted the statement, not thinking it possible that you could already have had any transactions with the Jews, but he assured me that what he asserted was a fact. Had I been consulted,

this unpleasant exposure would have been avoided," and Mr. Papworth looked more conscious of his own wisdom than ever.

"I never borrowed a *guinea* in my life, nor had any transaction with a money-lender," replied Strathern, indignantly, his cheek growing red with anger.

"Then I must conclude that you accepted some bill to accommodate a friend. A most imprudent measure, permit me to say."

"About the prudence of it I will not argue, but, with my notions, I should find it difficult to resist the pleadings of an old friend for a few thousands to extricate him from embarrassments."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir, for with such notions, carried into effect, few fortunes, however large, could long withstand the shocks certain to come from them."

The tone of rebuke assumed by Mr. Papworth offended and irritated his client, and not the less so that he began to feel the wisdom of the counsel offered to him. He therefore left the chambers of his solicitor in a very ill-humour, angry with him, with Lord Francis Musgrove, but most of all with himself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

No man so stern but he can feel
The influence that goodness hath,
E'en hearts long canker'd it can heal,
And bring back Hope, to light the path
Which man's own errors had obscured,
When into misanthropy lured.

Two days after Mr. Wandsworth had obtained Mrs. Sydney's permission for Mr. Sydney to pay her a visit, that gentleman made his appearance at the cottage. He was a man advanced in years, in very delicate health, and with an extremely unprepossessing countenance. Shy and taciturn, he presented himself to the ladies with great *gaucherie*, but the gentleness and suavity of their manner soon reassured him. He almost apologised for claiming his right to the estate so long believed to be Miss Sydney's, and expressed his deep sense of the honourable conduct of both the ladies in at once yielding up the property, without

waiting for the decision of a court of law. "This young lady," said he, turning to Louisa, "is heir-at-law to the whole estates after my death, in case I die without male issue; and as, at my age, and unmarried, there is little probability of my leaving a son, I may, in fact, consider myself as only steward to my fair young kinswoman."

Strange and unaccountable as it might seem, Mr. Wandsworth had never communicated to the ladies that the estate, of which Miss Sydney was now dispossessed, would revert to her, in case of Mr. Sydney's dying without male issue. Yet such was the fact, and he was actuated to this concealment by two motives; the first was a desire of guarding Louisa, for whom he entertained a sincere regard, from becoming the prey of some designing fortune-hunter, should it be known that only an aged and infirm man stood between her and so large a fortune; and the second, a wish of curing her of the proneness to suspicion, which, little as he had known her since she had reached womanhood, he had discovered formed the only flaw in her nature.

"Yes, she desires and deserves to be loved for herself alone," thought Mr. Wandsworth, "and how can she ever be sure of attaining this certainty, unless it is believed that she has for ever lost the vast wealth to which she was heiress? The man who seeks her

for his bride, knowing her to be portionless, will entitle himself to her lasting faith in his affection, and this confidence will be the surest basis for their mutual happiness. This certainty no heiress, whatever her charms, can have; and it is now in my power to secure this future blessing for her, by not revealing that she is next heir-at-law in the entail. Mr. Sydney is not likely to keep her long out of the estates. I learned by chance the other day from his physician, that he has organic disease of the heart. Where, then, can be the harm of letting both ladies imagine that the estates are gone for ever from Miss Sydney? The somewhat spoilt and pampered child of fortune will, by this stroke of adversity, learn to see the world in a new and truer light, and her character will come out purer from the trial."

Such were the reflections that passed through Mr. Wandsworth's mind, and induced him to adopt the concealment alluded to. He had several examples brought before him, in his professional capacity, of the dangers to which heiresses are exposed, and the misery which follows the interested marriages into which they are but too frequently duped. Hence he looked with pity and alarm on this devoted class, and would fain preserve Miss Sydney from the fate that often awaits them. But he forgot the anxiety to which he was condemning her fond mother—the days

of care and sleepless nights *she* must endure while she believed her daughter would inherit only the scanty portion she could hereafter secure her by insuring her life. Now the truth was revealed, in spite of all Mr. Wandsworth's schemes to conceal it, and a load of anxiety that weighed heavily on the oppressed breast of Mrs. Sydney was removed from it; yet she uttered no exclamation of surprise or satisfaction at the discovery that had thus been made to her. She remained calm and grave as before; and on looking at her daughter, observed that not a ray of pleasure sparkled in her eye, nor a smile dimpled her cheek, at learning what would have afforded such joy to others in a similar position.

"Yes, I repeat," said Mr. Sydney, "that, with my bad health, I am not likely to keep this young lady long out of the estates she has so readily resigned to me."

Mrs. Sydney attempted to change the subject, by reverting to the state of the weather, that never-failing topic to which the English have recourse when they wish to fill up any hiatus in their conversations, or to direct attention to something else. The late prevalence of south winds, with their salutary effect on delicate constitutions in temperate climates like our own, was commented on with a gratitude experienced only by invalids who have severely suffered from the

too frequent visits of the east wind; but the old gentleman, bent on adhering to personalities, quickly recurred to the subject that most occupied him.

"Before I saw you, ladies," observed he, "I thought it a great hardship that, accustomed to every luxury as you have been, you should now be compelled to live in so very different a style; but since I have seen you, so fitted as you both are to enjoy all the advantages of the sphere in life in which you were born, the hardship strikes me as being much greater; and, pardon me, and do not take amiss what I am going to add, I would fain hit upon some means of securing to Miss Sydney, during my life, a portion, at least, of the fortune she will inherit after me."

Had Mr. Sydney been about to propose something greatly disadvantageous, instead of the reverse, to his kinswoman, he could not have been more embarrassed than while he uttered these words. The fact is, the mild dignity and distinguished bearing of both the ladies impressed him with so high a respect for them, that he almost trembled lest he should, in his ignorance of what was due to persons so refined, say something that might give offence, or wound their sensitive delicacy. He had come to see them, prepared for hearing some lamentations on their altered fortunes, or some indirect appeals to his generosity; nay, such was the inveterate proneness to suspicion of his

nature, that the very act of their at once admitting the justice of his claim, and resigning the property without contesting it, much as it had gratified him, awakened a doubt in his mind that it was done in order to have a right to expect some indemnification from him, for saving the delay and expenses always incurred by a lawsuit. It was to have an opportunity of judging how far his suspicions were justly founded that he sought this interview, for he peculiarly piqued himself on his quickness of perception, and insight into characters and motives. Finding that no allusion was made to their altered position, on the privations of which he expected that they would be most eloquent, he opened the subject himself, to give them an occasion of speaking on it, but seeing the pride and delicacy which withheld them from reverting to it, his desire to serve them rose in proportion to his appreciation of their characters, and with it a timidity to which he had heretofore been a stranger, where pecuniary matters were concerned.

"You are very kind and considerate, sir," said Mrs. Sydney, "and I feel, as I am sure my daughter also does, greatly obliged by your desire to serve us, but we neither of us shall find our comforts impaired by the unexpected reverse in her fortune, for we have already learned to be content with our present lot."

"You must at least suffer me, madam, to refuse

any portion of the money you proposed refunding from your purse. On this point I am decided, and nothing shall change my decision;" and the old man's pale face became flushed by the novel excitement occasioned by his disinterested resolution.

"Really, sir, you overpower us by your kindness," said Mrs. Sydney, embarrassed by his unexpected generosity, and unaccustomed to accept obligations.

"Ah! madam, if you could but know the pleasure it gives me to be useful to you and this young lady, you would not wonder that I press my suit so warmly. I feel since I have entered this room as I have not felt for many a long year. The hard substance in which my heart was encased seems to have melted away, and I once more believe in goodness and noble sentiments, and am the happier for believing in them. It is you, ladies, who have wrought this change. Do not repel the kindly affections of a heart, old and withered though it be by misanthropy. Let me act as your friend, your kinsman, while I live; and let me die with the blessed conviction that I have in some way contributed to your comfort."

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, touched by the old man's fervour, simultaneously extended their hands to him. He pressed both within his, and his eyes became humid.

"Look," exclaimed he, "at the miracle you have

accomplished," and he pointed to his tearful eyes. "Never did I suspect that a tear would again dim them. Ah! had I but known you, never should I have claimed the property so much more properly vested in your hands than mine. But, unhappily for me, I long ago lost all faith in goodness; and because I met with some unworthy persons, who first duped and then mocked me, I believed that all were bad, and turned misanthrope. You are too good even to form a notion of the wretchedness of such an unnatural state of mind. If you could, you would take pity on me, and prevent a relapse by letting me hope that in time I may prove worthy of the good-will I would make any sacrifice to obtain. Mine has been a most unhappy life, and, although I have only myself to blame for misplaced confidence, and all its terrible results, my misery has not been the less severe, that I had the consciousness of meriting it by my want of caution in not ascertaining the characters of those I so blindly trusted. Since the detection of their iniquity, I have shut my heart against all sympathy and kindness towards my fellow-creatures. Seeing that wealth commanded respect, and gave power, I have hoarded mine, sternly refusing to succour distress, and denying myself all save the common necessaries of life. When I discovered my claim to your estates," — and he turned to Miss Sydney — "yes, let

me still call them yours, I rejoiced in this accession of wealth, which would minister to my sordid pleasure of accumulating useless heaps of gold. I felt no pity for you, thus unexpectedly deprived of fortune, home—I deemed you, like many of your sex, worldly-minded and extravagant, and rejoiced that I could, even for a few years, keep the fortune from some one of those calculating spendthrifts who seek heiresses to repair their ruined finances, and to whom I considered you would inevitably fall a prey. I have seen you, and my opinions, my feelings, are wholly changed. I now wish for nothing so much as to resign to you the estates which will be yours at my death. Suffer me to do so. Plead for me, dear madam, with your daughter, and, if you persuade her, you will secure me a happiness greater than wealth ever could bestow."

"Do not think me ungrateful, dear sir," said Louisa, "in declining your most generous offer. I do assure you that I deeply feel your kindness, and that no doubt of its stability influences my refusal. I, like you, sir, have often thought on the position of heiresses, and have dreaded the being sought by some mercenary suitor for my possessions, and not for myself. This thought has, I will confess to you, sometimes poisoned my happiness; and, though you may accuse me of being romantic, I acknowledge that I have

wished I could have the certainty of being loved for myself alone. The belief in my loss of fortune will be the only means of ever acquiring this certainty, and this motive would be quite sufficient to make me decline taking advantage of your generous intentions in my favour."

"There may be wisdom in your plan, my dear young lady, but permit me to say that there is also something less praiseworthy in it. Yes, there is suspicion, and of this baleful passion you must beware. Be assured, and I speak from experience, suspicion is even more injurious than want of caution. By it we wound and drive from us noble hearts, and canker our own."

Louisa Sydney's colour mounted to her temples at this friendly reproof, and her mother internally thanked him who uttered it.

"It was by my suspicions that I offended every good person with whom I came in contact," resumed Mr. Sydney, "and that honest indignation on their parts, which was but the result of their conscious innocence, I, in my wilful blindness, attributed to anger at finding their schemes detected. Ah! since the scales have fallen from my eyes, and you, ladies, have effected this prodigy, how many self-accusations rise up against my conduct towards those whom I misjudged and wronged by my suspicions, and to

whom, alas! it is now too late to make atonement."

Mr. Sydney took leave of the ladies an altered man, and left them greatly interested in his favour. His frankness in acknowledging his faults almost effaced the recollection of them from their minds, and, though both had decided not to accept the restitution he was so desirous to make, they nevertheless felt as much gratitude towards him as if they had availed themselves of it.

How true is the observation made by one who well understood mankind, that there are some natures, which by a contact with certain persons, are made better or worse! Mr. Sydney exemplified this hypothesis. Not naturally an ill-disposed man, by the deceptions practised on him in his youth, and discovered too late to prevent their results from being felt as a serious inconvenience in after-years, he became soured and misanthropic. The suspicion and dislike manifested by him towards his fellow-men, in turn, excited their ill-will, and many were the instances in which he had to complain of injuries and annoyances that might never have been inflicted, had he not, by the exhibition of his bad opinion of them, awakened evil propensities in those whom he encountered, and which otherwise might have remained dormant.

The impulse which prompts men to justify a favour-

able impression entertained of them has been sometimes observed to lead them to fulfil the evil attributed to them. Hence, while philanthropists, by their faith in goodness—a faith based on self-knowledge—are calculated to render mankind better, misanthropists produce the contrary effect, and often cause the wrongs they anticipate.

Mr. Sydney's morose and egotistical character threw him out of the circle of good men; and, finding those with whom he mixed to be all that he had previously been prepared to believe them, he, in proportion to his low estimate of them, formed a high one of his own powers of discrimination, and rejoiced at the notion that, however bad the world might be—and bad he was determined to think it—it could not exceed his conviction of its turpitude. The first really good man with whom, for many years, he was brought in communication was Mr. Wandsworth; but even this gentleman's good qualities were thrown into the shade by the jaundiced medium through which they were viewed, and, predisposed to see only evil, Mr. Sydney set him down as a hypocrite, who was enacting a *rôle* of honesty and good-nature. The native dignity and freedom from worldliness in Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, so different to what he had anticipated, at once produced a powerful effect on the mind of the old man; and there was something

so pleasurable in the new emotions engendered in his breast by a belief in worth and truth, that he felt impelled to cherish, with no ordinary good-will, those who awakened these soothing but long-slumbering guests. When he entered Mr. Wandsworth's office the next day, his countenance was so much brightened that he was hardly to be recognised.

"You never told me what angels my kinswomen are," said he; "if you had, how much trouble would have been spared them!"

Mr. Wandsworth looked at him with surprise, so little prepared was he for this burst of admiration. "I think, sir," replied he, "that I *did* mention what very amiable and excellent ladies Mrs. and Miss Sydney are, and, to confess the truth, the intimation appeared to interest you so little that I am not surprised it has escaped your recollection."

"Amiable, and excellent, forsooth! why these are words applied to every woman who is not known to be positively the reverse. It is no wonder that I paid little attention to them. Why, I have heard these terms coupled with the names of women whom I knew to possess no one quality to justify them. You should have told me that my kinswomen (he seemed extremely fond of designating Mrs. Sydney and her daughter as such) were unlike all other women—

that they were, in fact, what I believe them to be, angels."

"And you, sir, would have taunted me for such hyperbolical praise, and would have suspected me of trying to work on your feelings in their favour. Nay, more, when I did remind you that they stood in some degree of relationship to you, you angrily denied it."

"Then I was a fool, and, what's worse, a brute for so doing. But I am no longer morally blind. They have torn from my mental vision the bandage of prejudice which has so long prevented me from discerning goodness and truth; I can now plainly discern, ay, and value both, and this comfort I owe to my dear kinswomen. Oh! what a blessing it is to have found such! I am no longer alone in the world, my sole occupation to defeat and outwit those who I thought had similar designs on me. No, I throw prudence to the dogs, I will have no more of it. Henceforth I will put my faith in the existence of goodness, and cherish it wherever it is found. I have now something to live for—dear, estimable relations, who, perhaps, in time may learn to entertain for me some portion of that affection which I already feel for them. What I now came here for is to entreat you to use your influence with them to return to the home they so lately left, and to accept the restitution of the

estates which, in my ignorance of their inestimable qualities, I claimed."

"If I know the ladies well, and I think I do, no argument of mine will induce them to consent to this measure."

"Promise me at least that you will endeavour to persuade them. I said all I could, but I have so long got out of the way of begging people to take money, that I fear I have not the art of persuasion. Why should this lovely girl be kept out of her fortune until I die, instead of letting me have the comfort of seeing her enjoy it?"

Mr. Wandsworth listened with equal surprise and satisfaction to the generous sentiments which had so unexpectedly sprang up in the breast of him whom he had hitherto viewed only in the light of a sordid miser and obdurate misanthropist.

"You look astonished," said Mr. Sydney, "I see you do, and, to say the truth, I am myself surprised at the total change wrought in my feelings. But it is my kinswomen who have effected this revolution; all the merit is theirs, for had I never known them, I should never have believed in goodness. I wish to prove my gratitude to them, and one of my motives in coming here is to request you to draw up my will according to the instructions I will give you. Take down what I am about to say."

"Had you not better employ your own legal adviser? We of the profession do not like interfering with the clients of other solicitors."

"Stuff, nonsense! Do not refuse compliance with my request. Life is uncertain, and in my case peculiarly so, for my physician has told me that I have organic disease of the heart, and at any moment the main-spring of the machine may give way. Would you ever forgive yourself if, through your notions of professional etiquette, I should happen to die before a will to benefit those you profess to like was executed? Come, make no more difficulties, take your pen, and note down my instructions."

Mr. Wandsworth did as he was told, and Mr. Sydney dictated the following instructions:—

"I, being of sound mind but in indifferent health, hereby revoke all wills I may have heretofore made, and declare this to be my last and only valid one. I bequeath to Mrs. Sydney, the widow of my late kinsman, Augustus Henry Sydney, Esq., of Sydney Park and Easingham Hall, the whole of my property, landed as well as in the funds and personal; the same to descend at her death to her only child, Louisa Sydney, and to her descendants, male or female, in regular succession."

"Now let this be engrossed with as little delay as possible, for I shall not feel easy in my mind until it is signed and sealed."

Mr. Wandsworth promised that it should be ready for signature on the following day, and Mr. Sydney left him. He had not long departed, when a stranger of distinguished appearance demanded to see him alone.

"Your character, sir, is known to me," said the stranger, when they were *tête-à-tête*, "and it is the confidence it has inspired that has induced me to seek this interview. You are, I believe, the legal adviser, nay, more, the friend of Mrs. and Miss Sydney."

Mr. Wandsworth bowed assent.

"I have heard that, through some flaw in the will of her grandfather, the estates to which Miss Sydney was considered to be entitled have gone to a distant relation, and that Mrs. Sydney, with that high sense of honour that characterises her, has determined on devoting a great portion of her fortune to the payment of the sums claimed by the present owner of the estates. Fearing that, under those circumstances, these estimable ladies may suffer any privations, I have ventured to wait upon you, to request you to receive for their use such an annual sum as will secure the comforts to which they have been accustomed."

There was something so frank and earnest in the countenance and manner of the stranger, that Mr. Wandsworth became greatly impressed in his favour.

"I am happy to tell you, sir," replied he, "that although the estates, as you have heard, have passed away to Mr. Sydney, the ladies are not placed in circumstances that require pecuniary assistance. May I inquire the name of the gentleman who has evinced such an interest in them?"

"Had the assistance offered been accepted, I would have, in strict confidence, made you acquainted with the donor, I being his agent on this occasion;" and a blush which mounted to the brow of the speaker might have denoted, even to a less observant witness than Mr. Wandsworth, his consciousness of practising a little disingenuousness on this point; "but," continued he, "as it is declined, there is no necessity for revealing the name; and if, as an utter stranger, I may be permitted to ask a favour, I would entreat of you not to name this interview, nor revert to the subject of it to either of the ladies in question."

"You may count on my silence, sir," replied Mr. Wandsworth; and the stranger, rising from his seat, wished him good morning, and departed.

"Who can he be?" thought Mr. Wandsworth, "I never saw a more prepossessing countenance. Nevertheless, I am sure that *he* was not the agent, but the principal in the generous gift he wished to bestow. His rising colour betrayed it, and also convinced me that he is not habituated to deception. He is a

fine young man, and I should like to know more of him."

The stranger, as my reader has doubtless already divined, was no other than Strathern. He had met Mr. Rhymer the previous day, and that gentleman had communicated to him the painful intelligence, learned at a party the preceding evening, that Mrs. and Miss Sydney were actually reduced to positive privations.

"If I could but see them," said that gentleman, all his habitual cynicism of manner disappearing in the interest he experienced in the fate of the two amiable ladies referred to, "I think I could persuade them to allow an old friend like myself to assist them. Age has its privileges—and it had need, Heaven knows, with all the infirmities and annoyances it entails! Mine—and, for the nonce, I rejoice in it—ought to obviate all objections to my bestowing on these worthy ladies a portion of my useless gold. They refuse to receive me, probably believing, as so many of those who form the world of fashion do, that because I cannot always control the expression of my disapprobation of the follies and selfishness I behold, I cannot sympathise with unmerited misfortune, or desire to relieve it. Well, so be it. Let the hypocrite, who utters only soft words, and greets foes as well as friends with smiles, but who is incapable of a kind deed, receive the meed of applause from those who

look no deeper than the surface, while I—but no matter. What care I for the opinion of the senseless herd? I must find out, through the solicitor of these ladies, whether I can be of use."

Strathern immediately went to Mr. Wandsworth's office, but he was not there, and it was only the next day that he found him. Unmindful of his own circumstances, he had taken two thousand pounds, out of a sum of four lodged for him at his banker's only the previous day, to place in the hands of Mr. Wandsworth; and although assured by that gentleman that the ladies did not stand in need of assistance, he could not vanquish the uneasiness which the bare notion of their being in difficulties occasioned him. He found, on his return home, a letter from his banker, apprising him that bills drawn on him at Naples, by Lord Delmington, for an amount that exceeded the funds placed to his credit in their hands, had arrived by that post, and requiring his instructions whether or not they should be honoured, with a reminder of the necessity of immediately lodging the amount overdrawn. He immediately replaced the two thousand drawn out the previous day, and again wrote to his solicitor to urge the completion of the loan for which he was in treaty. Having despatched his letter, he strolled down towards St. James's Street, and had just reached in front of the bay

window of White's Club, that "cynosure of curious eyes," and then filled with well-known faces of men about town, as the phrase goes, when a slight tap on the shoulder caused him to look round, and, instead of beholding some familiar companion, he saw an ill-looking man, shabbily dressed, who said, "You are my prisoner, sir."

"There must be some mistake," observed Strathern, overpowered by the consciousness of the many witnesses to this disagreeable and disgraceful adventure, and precisely the very last witnesses he could have borne on such an occasion.

"No, sir, there is no mistake. I harrest you at the suit of Mr. Drinkwater, and you must come with me."

Not a man of the many acquaintances and *soi-disant* friends whom he recognised in the bay window came forth to speak to him. He would have given anything to have been out of their sight, yet he involuntarily turned his eyes again towards the window, and saw his *ci-devant* friend, the Marquis of Rochampton, laughing heartily, while Lord Francis Musgrove, with a rueful countenance, contemplated the painful position of Strathern, but moved not from his place. Crockford's windows, too, were filled with gazers to this humiliating scene, and the street was, as usual on a fine day in the fashionable season, and at that hour,

five o'clock, crowded with equipages, equestrians, and pedestrians. A much less proud man than Strathern, and in a much less public place, would have deeply felt the humiliation of the position in which he was at that moment placed, but that it should occur in a spot where the eyes of those whom he would have the most wished to avoid were fixed on him, terribly increased his mortification. "You will not, I suppose, object to my having a carriage," said he to the sheriff's officer, as bailiffs in our more civilized times are styled.

"I hobjects to nothing whatsomdever that is legal, and that a gentleman is willing to pay for," was the answer. "So, if you will jest step with me down to the stand, we'll find one."

There was no alternative; so Strathern walked to the stand, side by side with his ill-looking companion, whose dress and appearance, but too clearly indicating his calling, excited the attention of all who met them in St. James's Street. A carriage being called, Strathern entered it, and his attendant following him, *sans ceremonie*, coolly seated himself by his side.

"To Chancery Lane, I s'pose!" said the coachman, winking his eye in a very knowing manner at the bailiff, proving that he was well acquainted with his whereabouts.

"To my solicitor's, Mr. Papworth, in Lincoln's Inn Fields," replied Strathern.

At another moment he would have been painfully sensible of the proximity of his odious companion, whose garments exhaled the disgusting odour of the very worst tobacco, but the mingled feelings of anger and shame which filled his heart precluded for the moment the consciousness of lighter annoyances.

"You'll be pleased to remember, sir, as how I harrested you at ten minutes to five o'clock. It's my juty to take you direct to the lock-up house, in Chancery Lane; but as I'm halways ready to oblige gentlemen—that is, gentlemen that hacts as sich—I have made no hobjection to letting you go to your lawyer's, which I hope you will take hinto consideration."

Mr. Papworth was at home, and evinced much less surprise at seeing Strathern a prisoner than might naturally have been expected.

"I answer for this gentleman," said he, nodding to the bailiff, "so you may stay outside."

"Certainly, sir; if as how you hanswer for my prisoner;" and the man retired.

Before Strathern could give vent to the angry remonstrance that rose to his lips at the humiliation to which he was exposed, and which he very properly attributed, in the first instance, to having followed Mr. Papworth's advice to borrow money to pay Mr.

Drinkwater, instead of selling out of the funds, at however considerable a loss to himself, rather than incur the present heavy penalty, and in the second, at the dilatoriness of Mr. Papworth in not having long before concluded the loan, that gentleman coolly observed that, though sorry to see him in such a dilemma, he must say that Mr. Strathern had no one to blame but himself.

"Had you consulted me before you placed yourself in the power of Mr. Drinkwater, this never could have occurred; and had you, since your return, not allowed your name and credit to be irreparably injured by your acceptances being hawked about from money-lender to money-lender, by the unprincipled spendthrift for whose accommodation you lent it, I should not have found such difficulty in borrowing the money for you as I have experienced."

"Your recriminatory reflections are inopportune and misplaced," replied Strathern, drawing himself up proudly and sternly. "It is by following your advice, instead of selling out, as I proposed, that I find myself thus humiliated. I will now at once sell, at whatever loss; but as this cannot be accomplished at a moment's notice, I suppose you cannot hesitate to liberate me from the grasp of the bailiff outside."

Mr. Papworth saw that his client was not in a

humour to be trifled with, and he remembered that he, though embarrassed for the moment, was still a rich man; so, without further comment, he gave security for him, and Strathern returned to his hotel.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

When generous feelings fled man's breast,
Too stern and rude to guard them there,
In woman's heart they vowed to rest—
Meet shrine for all that's good and fair—
And there in pristine force they dwell,
From flowery youth to wintry age,
To pity's voice responding well,
A war 'gainst selfishness they wage.

The next day, Mr. Sydney was punctual to his appointment with Mr. Wandsworth, and signed his will. "This act is a great weight off my mind," said he, "for never did I experience such a dread of dying as since I became acquainted with my fair kinswomen, and thought of assuring all my possessions to them. I have really been in a state of great nervous excitement during the last twenty-four hours, lest I should be snatched off suddenly — as I am led to believe will be my fate one day—ere this testament was executed.

Now I shall sleep calmly, and await the will of God, certain that those dear to me will be repaid for the annoyance I inflicted when I knew not their worth."

When Mr. Wandsworth, a few days after, paid his next visit to the ladies, he urged them to accept the offer of Mr. Sydney again to take possession of their ancient home, but both were decided not to do so, from a feeling that under existing circumstances such a step could not accord with their notions of right, nor could either of them believe that much reliance was to be placed in the sudden friendship which had so unexpectedly sprung up in the breast of Mr. Sydney, a sentiment so wholly at variance with his former character and conduct. Be assured, madam, that you do not render him justice," replied Mr. Wandsworth. "for, whatever may have been his faults, he is now fully aware of them, and I do not entertain any dread of his relapsing."

When Mr. Wandsworth was on his road back towards London that day, he saw half a dozen persons around a carriage which had stopped near a public-house. His curiosity being excited, he rode near the vehicle, and, in answer to his inquiries, was told that a gentleman had been suddenly taken ill in it. He approached nearer, and was greatly shocked on recognising, in the dying man before him, Mr. Sydney. He galloped off in search of a surgeon, and, having

found one at Richmond, he insisted on his mounting his horse while he took that of his groom, and hastened back to the carriage. But, though Mr. Wandsworth had only been a short time absent, Mr. Sydney had breathed his last before his return ; and the surgeon declared his belief, that, from the first moment of the attack, all hope of recovery was over, as it was evident the poor gentleman had died of some disease of the heart. The body was taken into the public-house, there to remain until a coroner's inquest could be held on it, and Mr. Wandsworth, considerably agitated, gave orders that every respect should be paid to it. The servant of the deceased informed him that during the last few days he had observed his master to be unusually excited.

" Yesterday evening, sir, he seemed more comfortable," said the man ; " but this morning he complained of a spasm in his left side. I wanted to go for the doctor, but he wouldn't hear of it, as he said he'd be better after he had been to Richmond to see Mrs. and Miss Sydney, about whom he was continually speaking during the last week. We had got so far on our way, when I, who was sitting on the box with the coachman, felt the check-string pulled violently ; and, when I turned round, I saw my poor master in a sort of fit. I jumped down, and raised him in the carriage, for he had fallen back on the seat, and in

two minutes after you came up, sir. I thought he was near his end, poor gentleman, for, during the last fortnight or so, he wasn't a bit like his former self, but seemed so anxious and fluttered like, until three or four days ago, when he said now his mind was easier."

Mr. Wandsworth thought it right to return to the ladies, and acquaint them with the sad event, which he revealed with caution and feeling.

"Poor man!" said Mrs. Sydney. "How sudden was his end! Yet let us rejoice in the reflection that he died an altered person, more at peace with himself and all mankind than he had been for many years."

"I now regret," observed Miss Sydney, "that we did not show him more kindness, dearest mother; but, the truth was, I feared he might suspect me of being influenced by mercenary motives, were I to be as demonstrative of my good-will towards him as I really felt disposed to be. Poverty renders one so timid lest the rich should misjudge one."

"You need no longer dread being misjudged on account of poverty, young lady," said Mr. Wandsworth. "May Heaven grant that you may escape the evil interpretations to which vast riches expose their possessors! You not only now regain the inheritance formerly believed to be yours, but become

next heir to the large fortune of Mr. Sydney, which he has bequeathed to your mother, with reversion to you."

Few in similar circumstances would have heard with such perfect calmness the intelligence communicated by Mr. Wandsworth as did Mrs. and Miss Sydney. The announcement only increased their regret for the deceased, whose friendship this bequest so undeniably proved; and any one who had chanced to see them on this occasion might have been led to think they mourned an esteemed and familiar friend, instead of a person they had only once beheld. Mr. Wandsworth related to them the anxiety betrayed by the deceased to have his will drawn and signed, and his prophetic dread lest he should be snatched from life ere its completion, and they became much affected as they listened to the detail.

"How strange are the ways of Providence!" observed Mrs. Sydney. "Who could have imagined, when we left our home as we then thought for ever, that our so promptly doing so would be the cause of bringing such an accumulation of fortune, or that we should so soon be enabled to return to it again, empowered to render the poor around us happy and contented?"

The coroner's inquest was held the day after the death of Mr. Sydney, and the physician who had for

many years attended him came forward to give his evidence, which left no doubt of the cause of his death, and the autopsy which took place confirmed his report to the jury, who brought in a verdict, of "Died by the visitation of God." The funeral took place a few days after, and the executors formally announced to Mrs. Sydney the large fortune to which she had now become entitled. The newspapers were soon filled with statements of the vast wealth inherited by Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, and, large as the fortune bequeathed to her really was, it was magnified into more than triple its amount by rumour. The whereabouts of the ladies again became noted in the fashionable journals, and once more begging letters and petitions came pouring in to them.

"Confess, dear mother, that riches have their annoyance," said Louisa Sydney, as letter after letter was unfolded by Mrs. Sydney and herself.

"Yes, my child; but we must not overlook our duties. We must succour the unfortunate, even though their name be Legion; and, to do this wisely, we must employ persons in whom confidence can be placed, to ascertain the truth of the statements contained in these letters."

"I acknowledge that a moderate competence has now more attractions for me than vast riches," ob-

served Louisa, "for there is a great charm in being permitted to live quietly and calmly,

'The world forgetting, by the world forgot,'

an advantage never allowed to the rich."

Louisa's thoughts constantly reverted to Strathern. "Where was he? what was he doing?" were questions which were continually recurring to her. That she was not forgotten, his renewed proposal proved most satisfactorily, and made, too, when she had fallen from prosperity to evil days. Oh! how would she have joyed to share her recovered fortune with him who so generously offered to make her the partner of his, when, stripped of her wealth, she could be sought for herself alone! Yes, this undoubted proof of disinterested affection had Strathern given her, and warmly did it plead in his favour now. Why, why, had he deceived her, and in the most tender point? Why, if he loved her, had he been seen with that fair but erring woman, whose image so often presented itself to her memory, and never without bringing with it the torturing pangs of jealousy?

Some days after the funeral it was found necessary that Mrs. Sydney should go to the house of the late Mr. Sydney, in order that the seals placed on the property in it should be removed in her presence.

Her daughter and Mr. Wandsworth accompanied her, and the executors were to meet her in Devonshire Place. The house was a large one, and contained pictures of great value, gold and silver plate of fine workmanship, cabinets filled with gems, cameos, and intaglios, curiously inlaid caskets, in which were female ornaments of the most splendid kind, with countless snuff-boxes, and *bijouterie* of every description. Rare books and illuminated missals were piled up in bookcases; and some of the rooms were filled with porcelain de Sevres, old Chelsea, Worcester, and Dresden china, splendid pieces of rock crystal set in precious stones, and rare tazzas in marble. Even the ladies, though accustomed to see fine things, were surprised to view the endless quantity hoarded up here.

"My poor friend," said one of the executors, noticing their astonishment, "devoted the greater portion of his time to attending sales, and bought everything that he considered to be going for less than its value. It was a mania with him, and he has left no less than two other houses filled with property of this description."

Mrs. Sydney felt positively embarrassed by the extent of her unexpected riches. Mr. Wandsworth undertook to place a confidential person in the house, and to have the various articles selected by the ladies

sent off to Sydney Park. On leaving the house to enter their carriage, they met Mr. Rhymer, who happened to be passing the door. Great was his surprise and pleasure at encountering them, and again and again did he assure them of it, with a warmth very unusual to him. "But do you know that I have painful intelligence to communicate relative to a friend you once valued," said he. "Poor Strathern! poor as it now appears in every sense of the word, for he is, I hear, irretrievably ruined."

Louisa Sydney turned pale as marble at this news, and felt very faint, though, remembering that the eye of the cynical Mr. Rhymer was fixed on her face, she made a desperate effort to conceal her emotions.

"Can it be possible?" asked Mrs. Sydney, who at this news felt all her former friendship for Strathern revive in her breast. "Rumour is so prone to exaggerate, that I would fain hope that some temporary embarrassment only has been magnified into ruin. Prosperity is, we know, so magnified—let us hope that adversity is likewise, and in this instance, overstated."

"All I know," replied Mr. Rhymer, somewhat piqued at the truth of his intelligence being questioned, "is, that Strathern was arrested in St. James's Street, in presence of several acquaintances of mine, from whom I heard the fact, and whose veracity I

could not doubt. He was taken off by a bailiff, to prison, I suppose, and where probably he may now be found."

"But he who had so large a fortune, and who was not addicted to play, or horse-racing, or any other of the amusements by which men ruin themselves," said Mrs. Sydney, "does it not seem improbable that in so short a time he should have come into such difficulty?"

"If you knew London as well as I do, my good lady, you would not deem this so extraordinary an event. Poor Strathern!—disappointed, as I hear he was, by some over-fastidious young lady, who threw him off because he was not as prudish as she thought right, became dull and moping—would not go into good society, and, so I suppose, fell into bad—was taken in to accept bills for some of his spendthrift acquaintances—gave away money as if it were dust to some whom no one else would relieve — and so, without playing, or horse-racing, for I never heard he was given to either, he is ruined, and I am sorry for it. But so it is; the wheel of fortune is ever moving; the rich of one day become poor the next, and *vice versa*. By the by, now I remember, how shocked and grieved poor Strathern was when I communicated to him the reverse of fortune of this young lady; he positively looked as sorry as if *he* had married her for her wealth, and found

himself wedded to a pauper instead of an heiress. Yes, it was strange, was it not? that I should be the person to inform him of Miss Sydney's loss of fortune, and now to tell you of *his!* But I must say he took my bad news much more to heart, ladies, than you do, which speaks favourably for female nerves."

When this sarcasm was uttered, never was one less merited, for both mother and daughter were thinking of how they should proceed in order to extricate Strathern from his embarrassment, to effect which, they felt no pecuniary sacrifice could be too great; but, knowing how it would wound the pride and delicacy of their poor friend to have this interference in his affairs made known and talked of, and aware that Mr. Rhymer, whatever his good-will to both parties might be, would mention it to some of the half hundred cronies with whom his evenings were usually spent, they carefully concealed their feelings under a mask of calmness, and had so drawn on themselves the sarcasm he had uttered.

"Now that you are the richest ladies in England," resumed Mr. Rhymer, "not even excepting that female Crœsus, Miss Burdett Coutts, whose tens of thousands have drawn more suitors around her than the famed Penelope of old, you will, I hope, permit your old friends sometimes to present their respects to you. In your less prosperous days, I know you denied them

the satisfaction of proving that their feelings towards you were unchanged; but I suppose you thought you could not admit *some* without seeing *all* who called on you, and that you did not like to give many the great pleasure that they would inevitably have enjoyed in beholding the once rich heiress reduced to comparative poverty. Yes, confess this was your motive for seclusion. Ay, you knew the world! Farewell! a thousand pardons for having so long detained you standing in the street; but there was no resisting the opportunity of telling you of the misfortune of a friend;" and off walked Mr. Rhymer.

"Let us re-enter the house, dearest mother," said Louisa Sydney, "and consult on what we had best do; something, and without delay, must be done. Mr. Wandsworth can ascertain whether our poor friend is indeed in confinement;" and tears filled Louisa's eyes as she uttered these words, and pictured to herself him, still so fondly loved, the solitary inmate of a prison.

"Yes, dear child, let us enter the house; but do not speak on the subject to Mr. Wandsworth: leave all to me."

Mrs. Sydney summoned her worthy solicitor from the upper part of the house, where he was still busily engaged locking up the treasures taken out of their cases for the inspection of the ladies, and acquainted

him with her anxious desire to discover the place of confinement of Mr. Strathern, and her intention of extricating him from his difficulties.

"May I inquire the age and appearance of this gentleman?" asked he.

Mrs. Sydney described Strathern; but never had her daughter thought her powers of description so feeble as when listening to what she considered a very unfavourable statement of her lover's exterior. Tall, well-made, a fine face, and distinguished bearing, the words used by her mother, did not, in her opinion, render justice to Strathern, though they conveyed to Mr. Wandsworth so correct a notion of a very superior-looking man, that it instantly occurred to him that the person described could be no other than the strange gentleman who had so lately come to his office to lodge money for the use of the ladies now before him. "Strange!" muttered he—"yet it must be so."

"What is strange?" inquired Mrs. Sydney.

"I am not quite sure that my suspicions are well founded, nor am I at liberty to communicate what has led to them," replied Mr. Wandsworth; "but be assured that I will immediately proceed to carry your wishes into execution, and to-morrow I hope to be able to inform you of the result. I have some clue to the discovery, for I know that a Mr. Papworth, with whom I am acquainted, is the solicitor of a gentleman of the

name of Strathern; and, as it is no common name, I dare say your friend is the gentleman."

The ladies drove back to the villa, their whole thoughts occupied by the sad account they had heard of Strathern. Those who know anything of the hearts of women are well aware that, unlike those of men, the misfortunes of persons once dear to them, however those misfortunes may have been occasioned by their own faults, invariably awaken commiseration and tenderness in their breasts, while in the sterner sex they but too frequently arouse only recrimination and ill-will.

Men are so much more selfish than women, and attach so much more importance to wealth, that they are prone to dislike those who have by their own folly forfeited it, or who may expect assistance at their hands. How often has the prodigal, whose only error consisted in too profuse an expenditure, and who, in the days of his prosperity, showered benefits on others, found, when adversity had overtaken him, that the men who basked with him in the sunshine of fortune, who shared the luxuries his hospitality lavished on them, and who used his purse or credit as their own, were the first to desert him when he stood in need of the assistance he had so often and so readily accorded to them! Knowledge of the world begets hardness of heart, and this knowledge men possess infinitely more than women.

It is, perhaps, the most charitable interpretation that can be put on their conduct towards their embarrassed friends and companions, when we suppose that the extent of their worldly wisdom, by teaching them to consider the possession of money as the *summum bonum* of happiness, and the surest basis for respect, renders them so averse to risk any portion of it for the relief of others, that they close their hearts and purses even to those for whom they once professed to entertain the liveliest friendship. Women, less skilled in this worldly lore, are more accessible to pity, and more prone to generosity. Seldom does misfortune, however incurred, appeal to them in vain ; and many a one of the gentler, or, as it is sometimes styled, the weaker sex, has made sacrifices, and endured privations, in order to assist the unfortunate, that lordly man, with all his boasted strength of mind, would not have the moral courage to encounter, or the fortitude to sustain, uncomplainingly.

Never did Louisa Sydney feel drawn towards her mother by such warm sentiments of affection, as when she witnessed her sympathy for the misfortunes of Strathern, and her generous decision to extricate him from their results ; and never, since they had left Rome, did she experience so much tenderness towards him as now, when she believed him to be the inmate of a prison—Strathern, the refined, the elegant, the intellectual companion, who had so often lent a charm to

their society by his varied powers of mind, and brilliant conversation, the solitary inhabitant of some gloomy chamber, bereft of all the elegances, if not the comforts, of life!

Such was the image that continually presented itself to the saddened thoughts of both mother and daughter, for Mrs. Sydney's feelings were nearly as fresh and unblighted by worldly wisdom as were her daughter's, and both loved each other the better for this sympathy between them. The bitter sarcasm uttered by Mr. Rhymer sunk as deep in the mind of Louisa as he wished it to do, for, though well disposed towards both mother and daughter, the cynic was angry at not producing as great an effect on them by the melancholy intelligence he communicated of Strathern as he calculated upon, and, mistaking their assumed calmness for indifference, he aimed this dart with unerring skill at her whose heart was, at the moment he pointed it, melting with pity and tenderness. "Had *poor* Strathern"—and oh, what a vast sum of kindness is often comprised in that little monosyllable *poor*!—"been indeed driven, as Mr. Rhymer asserted, by disappointment of the affections to fly from the society he was formed to adorn, into that which led to his ruin by rendering him the dupe of the impoverished *roués* of which it was composed?" was a question that often suggested itself to Louisa. "Might *she* not

have been too severe in her judgment and condemnation of her unhappy lover, in casting him off without permitting him an opportunity of justification?" was the next interrogation that reviving tenderness suggested; and then followed excuses, furnished by love, that, if offered by any other pleader, would have been silenced as weak and unsatisfactory. "What, if the woman with whom she had seen him had been a former acquaintance of his lighter hours, some fair unfortunate, 'more sinned against than sinning,' whom chance had thrown in his path at Rome, and whom pity had induced him to bestow a few brief hours on! Men felt so differently on such points from women, that that which, considering her engagement with him, had so deeply wounded and offended *her*, might be viewed by Strathern as a crime of no deep dye, and was only concealed from her through motives of delicacy, which precluded his referring to aught impure in her presence. Men were not to be judged so severely as women. Their education, their habits, were so widely different. Yes, she might have been too stern, too unrelenting, and bitterly had *poor* Strathern expiated his error."

Such were the reflections of Louisa Sydney, who, totally forgetful that her mother had formerly offered in vain the same defence for Strathern that her own pity and revived tenderness now whispered, felt ready,

had her lover presented himself before her, to pardon and restore him to favour. It was his misfortunes that achieved this victory over offended pride and female delicacy; and, as she remembered that *he* had sought her when no longer the rich heiress she had formerly been, and when his improvidence rendered a wealthy wife so necessary to repair his shattered fortunes, she longed to prove to him that *she* was no less generous, and that his adversity had only served to endear him to her the more.

"How fortunate it is, my dearest child, that I should have inherited this large fortune, and precisely at this time!" said Mrs. Sydney, after a long silence, during which she had been reflecting on the position of Strathern.

"And that I, too, dearest mother, should have regained my inheritance. Had we heard of his misfortunes when we had not the power of relieving them, how very painful would it have been! Yet, though thankful to Providence for this great good, I am most truly grateful that my altered position afforded poor Henry the opportunity of proving, beyond all power of doubting, that he loved me for myself alone, a happiness always denied to heiresses."

"I never for a moment entertained a doubt of the perfect disinterestedness of Mr. Strathern. He was too proud, too noble-minded, to wed for fortune," re-

plied Mrs. Sydney; "and such is still my opinion of his delicacy on this point, that I believe he would suffer any hardship rather than condescend to accept succour from us. I have been devising many plans for extricating him without his being able to discover the source from which the aid comes; but, with so proud and sensitive a man, it is very difficult to arrange this."

"Could we not send him a hundred thousand pounds anonymously—ay, or two, if you thought that would be sufficient to save him?" said Louisa, with animation.

"Such gifts are so rare in these selfish days, that I fear, my child, that, coupling it with my recent acquisition of vast wealth, and my former friendship for him, he would instantly divine the donor, and refuse the donation."

"I wish good Mr. Wandsworth was come. He is so sensible and experienced, that he could probably suggest some mode of rescuing our poor friend. He has also so kind a heart that I am sure he will have pleasure in carrying our wishes into execution. I shall always esteem this excellent man, for having allowed us—and the world, too—to believe that my estates were gone from me for ever. It was to this stratagem of his that I am indebted for the happiness of knowing that poor Henry sought me for myself

alone, and the largest fortune could never have given me this imperishable gratification."

Mr. Wandsworth came to Thames Grove the following day, and his countenance announced that he was the bearer of good tidings.

"I am glad to be able to assure you, ladies, that Mr. Strathern *is not*, and *has not* been, the inmate of a prison, as you were led to believe. It is true that he was arrested, and in the most public part of London too—a very annoying circumstance for a gentleman like him, but, nevertheless, not without its counterbalancing advantages. An excessive generosity towards his acquaintance and friends, many of whom were unworthy of it, has been his besetting sin, and led him into the pernicious system of lending his name to bills for a very large amount for their accommodation. The bad reputation of those friends in all pecuniary transactions led to their having recourse to usurers of the very worst class to negociate them, so that the credit of Mr. Strathern became seriously injured by the contact with the drawers of these bills, and the money-lenders into whose hands unknown to him they passed. When a gentleman's bills are cashed at the rate of 40 per cent., his credit, as well as his fortune, sustains a serious injury.

"The architect employed to build for Mr. Strathern in his absence so far exceeded his instructions as to

erect a palace instead of a mansion, as was intended by the owner, and so vast was the expenditure incurred, that Mr. Strathern was advised by his solicitor to contest the payments, and to have the works surveyed. This proceeding irritated the architect, and induced him to take summary proceedings against Mr. Strathern, who was desirous of paying him, and only waited to do so until Mr. Papworth had effected a loan for the purpose, he being unwilling that his client should sell out of the funds while they were so low. Loans take some time to be arranged, and in the meanwhile the architect, alarmed at hearing that bills to a large amount with Mr. Strathern's signature were floating about in the worst hands, had him arrested. Mr. Papworth immediately liberated him, but the report of the arrest, coupled with the bill transactions, have given rise to the rumour that Mr. Strathern is wholly ruined, and, though free as air, persons are not wanting who still assert that he is in prison.

"His fashionable *soi-disant* friends have taken the alarm, and shun him as carefully as they before sought him. Mr. Papworth hopes that their selfishness and ingratitude will open Mr. Strathern's eyes to the folly of lavishing his money or credit on such a herd; hence he thinks that the publicity of the arrest, however painful at the moment, will extricate his

client from all association with the designing and unprincipled set that had got hold of him. I affected to have heard that a large loan was required, and offered to advance it, so that I have now established a communication with Mr. Papworth on this point, and can therefore, madam, carry your wishes into effect. I am happy to add, that Mr. Strathern's embarrassments are merely of a temporary nature, and that he is still in possession of a noble fortune."

"You have managed this affair admirably, my dear sir," said Mrs. Sydney. "Pray advance the loan on the most advantageous terms possible for Mr. Strathern, but take especial care that my name does not transpire in the business."

CHAPTER XLIX.

The love of gold rules all mankind,
And woman too, as cynics say;
The high, the low, as you will find,
This ruling passion all obey.
The court, the camp, the county, town,
Partake the thirst nought can assuage,
Unless Jove's show'rs came pouring down,
Or we revive the golden age.

The day which was to witness the solemnization of the ill-assorted nuptials of Lord Fitzwarren and the Lady Olivia Wellerby—that day so long desired by the lady, and anticipated with so little satisfaction by the gentleman, at length dawned. Many were the discussions and quarrels to which the various arrangements relative to the event had given rise; and although such altercations were as carefully concealed from the future bridegroom as was possible, nevertheless the bad tempers of the Wellerby family, and the little restraint the members of it were in the habit of

exercising over their ill-humour, permitted sufficient indications of it to escape, as served to convince Lord Fitzwarren that the domestic circle of his bride elect was anything but a well-united or agreeable one.

"Hang me if I know which is most in fault," would he say to himself, after having witnessed the sharp looks, and heard the angry replies which the ladies were in the habit of exchanging, while Lord Wellerby evinced the most perfect impartiality towards each and all of his "woman kind," reproving each in turn with a surly, half-muttered "pshaw," or invective, more resembling the growl of an ill-tempered old mastiff, than the words of a human being. The evening previous to the ceremony, Lady Olivia, putting on one of her most gracious smiles, asked Lord Fitzwarren to oblige her by not insisting on having that odious woman, Lady Mountserrat, present at the marriage.

"But I have promised her, and can't be off, Livy."

"What consequence can it be to break a promise to such a creature?—and when it will oblige me, surely you ought not to refuse my request!" and the Lady Olivia pouted, and assumed all the airs of an ill-used beauty.

"I never broke a promise in my life, however rashly made, Livy;" and Lord Fitzwarren sighed, as the thought presented itself to his mind that, had he

been less scrupulous with regard to engagements, he would not then be on the point of marriage with a woman for whom he entertained no sentiment of affection.

"You take things so gravely," said the Lady Olivia. "Keeping a serious engagement, and breaking through a trifling one, are two different things."

"Be assured, Livy, that those who attach no value to trivial engagements, will be very apt to break through grave ones. I told the marchioness that she should be present at my marriage; it seemed to please her, and nothing shall induce me to break my word; so say no more on the subject."

"But only fancy what an appearance it will have among the persons of any rank or station here, that a woman, whose gross vulgarity has rendered her the laughing-stock of all Rome and Naples, should be one of the company at the wedding of persons of fashion like us! Think, too, how annoying to have her name in the list to be sent to England, for the newspapers, of those who attended my marriage!"

"I see no necessity of a list being sent, but, at all events, at the wedding she shall be."

Lady Olivia saw that Lord Fitzwarren was firm on this point, and his obstinacy, as she termed it, somewhat alarmed her for the future. "What if she should find him adhere, with equal pertinacity, to other deci-

sions? But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!" thought Lady Olivia, "and let me be but once married, we shall see if I can't have a will of my own, as well as he." She therefore made a merit of necessity, put on a smiling countenance, and harmony was restored.

"I have been thinking, Justin," said the Marchioness of Mountserrat to her *femme de chambre*, "that I ought to make a present to the bride to-morrow. It is customary, I know, and though I dislike her, and her mother and sister, exceedingly, I shouldn't like to give them the power of saying I didn't know how to behave on such occasions."

"If I vas in your place, *madame la marquise*, I vould not give nothing at all. It is only trowing avay de money to dose dat vould not tank you."

"It is not to be thanked that I give, but merely to show these grand folk, as they think themselves, that I can afford to be generous. I therefore wish to dazzle, to surprise them, Justin, and I wish you could tell me what gift would be the most likely to have this effect."

"Let me tink," muttered Mademoiselle Justine, putting her hand to her brow, and looking as gravely as if the most important subject occupied her mind. After remaining some time musing, Mademoiselle Justine exclaimed, "I have it, I have it. Suppose, *madame la marquise*, you give de bride dose vite

garters, vid de diamond clasps, de finest, as de *bijoutier* said, dat ever vas made."

"Ah! the ordering these same garters was a capital hit of mine, Justin. I shall never forget the man's face of astonishment when I commanded them. I thought to myself, every one that is rich now-a-days has diamond ornaments of every kind, but I never saw or heard of any lady, not even a Queen, having garters with diamond clasps, and so I determined to have them. The jeweller exhibited them to half London before he sent them home, accounts were given of them in the newspapers, and people naturally enough imagined what an immense fortune I must have to afford such extravagance. Then I used to make people stare, by purposely dropping one of them when walking on the pier at Brighton, always taking care to have a footman to pick it up. Yes, Justin, the diamond dog-collar and garters did more to establish a belief in my great riches, than all my other ornaments, costly as they are, ay, and even my expensive equipages into the bargain. I hardly like to part with the garters, but as I must give something to the bride, I had better give what I shall least miss, and what I am sure will rather vex than please her."

The dress selected to be worn by the marchioness at the wedding was of so splendid a character as wholly to eclipse that of the bride, whose temper was by no

means improved at seeing all eyes attracted towards the person whose presence on the occasion she had used all her efforts to prevent, as also at observing the fixed determination on the part of that lady to render herself as conspicuous as possible. "Well, sir," said the marchioness, addressing the British minister, "here I am again. You have heard, I doubt not, of the shameful conduct of the marquis. He has proved himself a terrible scamp, for all he is a nobleman, and such treatment might have driven any other woman out of her senses. But I have a strong head of my own, ay, and a proud heart too, so I don't care a fig for him—not I; and he can't prevent me from being a marchioness, after all."

This speech was uttered in so loud a voice that it was heard by all present, and even the obtuse Lord and Lady Wellerby felt somewhat abashed by the vulgar exhibition of their new acquaintance. Lord Fitzwarren had never appeared so depressed in spirits as on this occasion, and, although he endeavoured to assume an air of cheerfulness, the effort was not crowned with success. Lord and Lady Wellerby were the only persons present whose gaiety was not assumed, for, delighted to have got a daughter off their hands, and without having to part with any money, they were in high spirits. Lady Sophia, filled with envy at her sister's good fortune in having secured a

rich husband, took little pains to conceal her feelings ; and Mr. Webworth, only just recovering from a bilious fever, the traces of which were still evident in his sallow countenance, looked as melancholy as a man could look who saw the most liberal of his friends entering a state which would preclude *him* from henceforth enjoying the agreeable privileges to be met with at the house of a rich and generous bachelor. "Poor Fitz !" thought Webworth, "this day ends his happiness, unless he should have the good fortune to lose his wife soon, either by death or separation. How lucky it was that he secured me something to make amends for the loss of the run of his table !"

The ceremony over, and the bride and bridegroom having received the congratulations of all present, Lady Mountserrat advanced, and said, "Come, my dear Lord Fitzwarren, don't look so sad. You are not the first man who has done that which he would rather have left undone, had he the choice. Remember, it will be all the same in a hundred years hence. That's what always consoles me when any thing vexes me."

This rude allusion to his feelings, and made in the presence of so many persons, greatly embarrassed Lord Fitzwarren, and deeply offended his bride, who, looking superciliously at the speaker, observed that "*She* must not suppose that every one was as un-

willing to approach the hymeneal altar as the Marquis of Mountserrat had been."

"I'm sure *you* were not unwilling," replied the marchioness, "and so every body has said for the last fifteen years."

The bride bit her lip, Lady Sophia smiled with satisfaction, and the party left the English minister's to adjourn to a *déjeûner* at their hotel, which Lord Wellerby, on parsimonious thoughts intent, had arranged should be given at the expense of his son-in-law. Lady Mountserrat's was the only nuptial gift presented to the bride, and when the *etui* which contained it was placed in Lady Fitzwarren's hand, she opened it with an eagerness that betrayed her belief that she should behold something very splendid. She did not at the first glance recognise for what use the present was intended, which the donor observing, she remarked—

"I thought you would at first be puzzled, for I venture to say you never before saw a pair of garters with diamond clasps. I am the first person who ever had any of similar costliness."

Lady Fitzwarren, albeit unused to blush, felt her cheeks suffused, and, closing the *etui*, which she laid carelessly on a console, merely bowed her thanks, instead of, as the marchioness had anticipated, expressing surprise and admiration at the gift.

"What a fool I was," thought she, "to have thrown away such a valuable present on such an ungrateful and ungracious woman! I wish I had it back again, and I would see her far enough before she should have it. And how shocked she looked, forsooth, as if there could be any harm in garters! But one never knows what to make of these fine ladies, they are so full of nonsense."

The party now sat down to *déjeûner*, to which no one seemed disposed to render justice except Lord Wellerby and the Marchioness of Mountserrat. Even Mr. Webworth failed to evince his usual appetite, as he from time to time cast pitying glances at the bridegroom, whose fate appeared to excite the deepest commiseration in his breast.

"Bless me! how melancholy you all look!" exclaimed the marchioness. "Why, this resembles a funeral much more than a bridal repast. Suppose we drink a glass of champagne to the health of the happy couple; a glass of wine may revive their drooping spirits as well as ours."

Lord Wellerby commended the proposal, the champagne was poured out, and Lady Mountserrat, taking on herself to do the honours of the *fête*, stood up and addressed the party. "As the person of the highest rank here, I believe it is my place to propose the toast. Here's to the health of the Earl and Countess

of Fitzwarren, and may they have many happy returns of this day, and we retain health to witness them!"

"Why, that's an Irish bull," lisped Mr. Webworth. "You don't mean to wish that they may be many times married?"

This observation set Lord Fitzwarren laughing, and the laugh was infectious.

"An Irish bull!" repeated the marchioness, growing red with anger; "and where's the harm in an Irish bull, I should like to know. If I choose to enliven a party that seemed as gloomy as if they were all going to be hanged, I don't see why *you* should meddle with it; and you'd show your manners better by behaving with proper respect to a person of my rank and station."

Lord Fitzwarren, fearing that Mr. Webworth might still further irritate the lady, changed the subject by saying he believed the travelling carriage was at the door. The bride arose, and a general move took place. Had Lady Fitzwarren been going out merely for a morning drive, she could not have evinced a more perfect indifference when taking leave of her parents and sister.

"Good bye, good bye," said she, as she offered her cheek to be kissed by them: "we shall soon meet in England, I suppose;" and off she tripped, nodding to the marchioness and Mr. Webworth.

Lady Wellerby held her handkerchief to her eyes for a moment or two, but, when she withdrew it, no trace of its aid having been required was visible: and if a tear did dim the eye of Lady Sophia, it arose from envy at her sister's good fortune, instead of regret at their separation. A small parcel had, unseen by all present, been slipped into her hand by Lord Fitzwarren at parting. She carefully consigned it, with her handkerchief, into her reticule, determined not to inspect its contents until in the privacy of her own chamber.

"Well, they're off," said the marchioness; "and, as we all seem to be rather a cup too low, I propose our sitting down to table again, and finishing our breakfast."

"A very good and sensible move," observed Lord Wellerby, always having a view to economy, "and I don't see why we should not make a regular dinner of it. Lady Mountserrat, may I have the honour of a glass of wine with you?"

"With all my heart, my lord."

"I see there is some fresh champagne in ice, so let us try it;" and here Lord Wellerby made a signal to his own servant, who was in attendance, and whispered him to be sure to have all the unopened wine removed to his apartment. "I have counted the bottles," said he, "so have them secured at once."

"Are you a whist-player, Mr. Webworth?" asked Lady Wellerby, her thoughts already occupied by the desire of making up a rubber, to win some more of the marchioness's money.

"Yeth, I do play occathionally; buth I am noth a good player."

"Then, if you have no other engagement, perhaps you would come and make up a rubber with us this evening!"

"I have no objection."

"Would it be more agreeable to you, my dear marchioness, that our whist party should take place in your ladyship's apartment, instead of in ours?" demanded Lord Wellerby, recollecting that if the party assembled in hers, the coffee, tea, lights, &c., would be paid for by the lady.

"In mine, if you please," replied Lady Mountserrat; "for my room is much more comfortable than yours, and the refreshments are much better served. I never spare expense. I always tell my *currier* to order everything of the best; and I am sure it's the only plan to be comfortable. Let me have the best of eating and drinking, say I; for one can't carry one's money into the next world; and therefore its best to enjoy it in this, while we can."

This doctrine so exactly coincided with the sentiments of Mr. Webworth, that he glanced towards the

speaker with a respectful deference, never conceived by him for any but the givers of good dinners.

"I quithe agwee with your ladyship," observed he, "and think that if all the wold was of your opinion, life would be much mo agweeable."

"More fools those that are not," replied the lady. "Money can always furnish capital breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, teas, and suppers. These five meals break up a long day better than any other mode that I ever could discover, and no one can prevent the enjoyment of them to those who can pay. Now, every other pleasure is in some degree more or less dependant on others. Society, for example, one can't enjoy, unless one meets with people—ay, and pleasant people, too — who are disposed to keep one company; but one's meals — ah! they are solid pleasure no one can spoil."

The expression of these sentiments achieved the conquest of Mr. Webworth; and the respectful deference of his manner towards the marchioness soon obliterated from her mind the anger occasioned by his former remark on Irish bulls. The conversation turned upon the culinary art; and in this he displayed so much skill and research, named so many excellent dishes and tempting breakfast-cakes, that the lady assured him that if, when he had no other engagement, he would come and partake her dinner, she

would gratefully hand over to him the task of ordering that repast, being now convinced that she would fare infinitely better by so doing.

Glad was the Lady Sophia when the breaking-up of the breakfast-party, prolonged to a late hour, enabled her to seek her chamber. Her first thought on entering it was—

"Oh, what a comfort to have this room to myself! to have no more an ill-natured, disagreeable sister continually reminding me of her good fortune and my own hateful dependance on selfish parents!"

How many kind and gentle hearts may be tempted to doubt that such unnatural feelings could exist in a sister's breast! How many, under similar circumstances, have wept long and bitterly when, re-entering the chamber once inhabited by a beloved sister—the companion of childhood, the dear friend of girlhood—they beheld the vacant chair she was wont to fill, the bed where she reposed, but in which she will slumber no more! How many fond and tender memories of the loved absent one rise up to cause fresh tears to flow—the confidential communion so long exchanged—the vows of unchanging affection, uttered through sobs the previous night, at the thought that it was the last they should share the same chamber—and the tearful words pronounced that morning! And now all was over! That loved companion was, alas! journeying

away to a new home, with him who was henceforth to be the arbiter of her destiny, and never more could they, who had hitherto known no separation, be to each other what they had from infancy been. Such, we know, are the feelings that fill most sisters' hearts on the day when a bride leaves the paternal roof; but widely different were those of Lady Sophia. She locked her door, drew forth the little parcel, and, to her infinite joy, discovered that it contained three bank-notes of one thousand francs each, and the following letter:—

"Dear Sophy—As I take it the old governor and my lady are not the most generous parents in the world, it has occurred to me that, instead of a wedding present usually presented by a new brother-in-law, the sum likely to be expended on such a gift would be more acceptable to you, I enclose you a hundred and twenty pounds. It will always give me pleasure to have you with Livy and me as much as possible, and I doubt not I shall be able to get you a husband one of these days among my friends. So keep up your spirits, and believe me, dear Sophy, your affectionate brother, "FITZWARREN."

Never before had Lady Sophia possessed even one quarter of the sum now her own, and great, consequently, was her satisfaction at the gift.

"He is not such a brute, after all," exclaimed she, as she finished the perusal of the letter, and folded the notes up into their neat little case, and placed them in her dressing-box. "Ah! had I but had the luck to have secured him, how happy I should have been! and it was only her superior address in flattering him, and concealing her bad temper, that won her the prize. Heigho! it is tormenting to think that I might have caught him had I been wiser;" and here the Lady Sophia contemplated her own face in the glass, with no slight degree of self-complacency, "for, as far as personal appearance goes, nobody can deny that I am quite as good-looking, if not better, than Livy. Yes, Fitzwarren may prove a useful as well as a generous friend, if I cultivate his good-will; I will, therefore, write him a letter of thanks. Much as I dislike Livy, staying with them in London or at Melton would be infinitely preferable to being at home, so I must conciliate *her* in order to get asked.

"Well, it is some comfort to know that one has got a hundred and twenty pounds to call one's own. How short a time should I be allowed to possess it if mamma knew it! but I will take care she shall not. It has been occurring to me that some good might be got by my paying some attention to the odious marchioness. She is as rich as Crœsus, and who knows but she might, if I made myself agreeable,

bestow some of her wealth on me, or, at least, give me some good presents! Papa and mamma toady her, in order to get her to play at whist, that they may win her money, so I don't see why *I* should not endeavour to derive some advantage from so vulgar and discreditable an acquaintance. I saw Mr. Webworth trying to ingratiate himself into her good graces to-day, but I can outwit him if I turn my mind to it."

Such were the reflections of Lady Sophia Wellerby as she sat in her chamber, and her subsequent conduct will prove that she acted up to them, for no sooner had her lady-mother left the hotel with her husband, in order to take a drive to relieve a severe headache, the effect consequent on a too copious repast, and a couple of glasses of champagne, than Lady Sophia, having excused herself from accompanying them, proceeded to the apartment of the marchioness, whom she found reposing in a *bergère*, fatigued by the excitement occasioned by the wine and her late luxurious repast. She stared with astonishment when she beheld her visitor, for hitherto the manner of Lady Sophia had been so cold and supercilious as not to have prepared her for this advance towards intimacy. "Bless me! my lady, is that you?" said Lady Mountserrat, rising from her recumbent posture.

"Pray don't move," replied Lady Sophia. "The truth is, I felt so lonely and so sad," and she applied

her handkerchief to her eyes, "that I came to sit a little with you, knowing what a kind heart you have, and that from no one else here could I expect sympathy."

"Indeed, then, you shall find it, for I can well fancy how lonesome you must feel at being left all by yourself, as a body may say, for fathers and mothers are not companions like a sister—not, to tell you the truth, that *yours* ever appeared to me to be a very kind or loving one."

"Alas! my sweet friend, for so you must permit me to call you, you have but too well divined the fact. Lady Fitzwarren was *not* a kind sister, but such is the natural tenderness of my disposition that, unrequited though it was, I lavished all its affection on the playfellow of my childhood, the companion of my more mature years."

"More fool you, my dear lady! Always make it a rule to love only those that love you, and you can't go wrong. That's my plan, and I never stray from it."

"Lady Fitzwarren quite governed me, for my infatuated fondness for her was so great that I invariably yielded to her wishes. From the first moment I had the pleasure of knowing you, dear Lady Mountserrat, I longed that we should become intimate friends, for I felt that we were suited to each other;

but my sister, jealous of your attractions, would not permit me to seek you, as I now, freed from her influence, do;" and the Lady Sophia took the red, coarse hand of the marchioness, and pressed it affectionately.

"See, now, what mistakes a person may make. Would you believe it?—I thought that you and your sister disliked each other very much, and that you both bore no good-will to me. But, said I to myself, what do I care whether they like me or not? so I went on never minding. But now you tell me that you really wish we should be good friends, I'm sure I have no objection. And so your sister was jealous of me? How droll! for, as I am a married woman, I couldn't be in her way," observed the marchioness, evidently pleased by the flattery of Lady Sophia.

"Not intentionally, I am aware, my sweet friend; but she feared that Lord Fitzwarren might compare your superior charms with her very inferior ones, and so perhaps slight her."

"Poor thing! I am sorry I made her uneasy."

"And will you let me love you a great deal, and promise to love me a little in return?" asked Lady Sophia, putting on one of her most winning smiles.

"Indeed, I will, so here's my hand on the bargain," replied the marchioness, already fascinated by the flattery and the flatterer.

"And, now that we are sworn friends, I must be perfectly confidential with you, my dear marchioness. My visits to you, when paid alone, must be stolen and secret ones; mamma never allows me to visit any one except with her, and would be very angry were she to discover that I broke through the rule. Therefore, when we meet in her presence, we must affect not to have previously seen each other that day. You will observe this, my sweet friend, will you not?"

"That I will; and it will be good fun to take in the old lady, won't it?"

"Capital! You are so clever, and so amusing, that even already I feel in better spirits."

"Yes, I'm no fool, be assured. How should I ever have got all Mr. Maclaurin's great fortune, or have become a marchioness, if I was?"

"You might have become anything you wished, my sweet friend. With charms like yours, and such cleverness, who could resist you?"

"And yet you see that scamp, the marquis, after all, only married me for my money. Heigho! the thought of that man always vexes me."

"He is unworthy of your wasting a thought on him. What a beautiful brooch that is you wear! I never saw anything half so pretty;" and the Lady Sophia looked at the ornament which fastened the robe of the marchioness with covetous eyes.

"I am glad you like it," replied the latter, instantly unfastening it, "for it is yours;" and she attached it to the *collerette* of Lady Sophia.

"Really, I must henceforth avoid admiring anything you wear," observed Lady Sophia, affecting to be embarrassed, though secretly delighted with the gift; "but you possess such a perfect taste, my sweet friend, that one cannot help expressing the admiration your beautiful ornaments and dress inspire."

"Now, I remember it," said the marchioness, "it is said that presents with a point are unlucky, unless some coin or other is given in exchange. Give me, therefore, a paul, to prevent bad luck."

"I have not one about me," replied Lady Sophia; "but I will give it you when next we meet."

"Now, mind you don't forget it; for I have known such things to happen about presents with a point or a sharp edge! Why, there was a pretty girl in our village in Ireland, and she bought a penknife at the fair to give to her sweetheart, to whom she was going to be married, and in two days afterwards he broke his engagement with her—the penknife had cut love! To be sure, people did say that he found out that she had been receiving presents from another young man, whom he had warned her against keeping company with, and that that was the cause. But it's my opinion that the penknife was the real cause."

Lady Sophia was disposed to smile at the *naïveté* with which the *parvenue* revealed the class of society with which her youthful days had been passed; but she checked the inclination, and tacitly assented to the superstitious feelings of her new friend, whom she left not until the carriage of her mother driving up to the door warned her to retreat.

"Adieu! my sweet friend," said she, embracing the marchioness with affected warmth, "we shall meet again in the evening. How I wish you were at liberty to converse with me instead of playing at cards!"

"So do I too, my dear; for I dislike playing, and hate losing my money. Not that I value money, but that I don't like the bad luck of the thing."

CHAPTER L.

Oh! would the young and rich, whose path of life
Is strewn with flow'rs that hide the thorns beneath,
Reflect that pleasure too indulged is rife
With evil, and soon fades the scented wreath
That lends to luxury a transient grace,
Like that which revellers were wont to twine
In ancient days around each rosy face,
And brimming bowl fill'd high with rosy wine;
But not less deleterious were the bowls,
Though round them flow'rs exhal'd their perfum'd souls!

"And so Strathern is quite done up—completely ruined, I hear," said the Marquis of Mountserrat to Lord Francis Musgrove and a few more of the set, as they sat in the bay, or as it might more aptly be called the *beau* window at ——'s club.

"Quite, as I understand," answered Lord Francis, with a rueful elongation of visage.

"But how the deuce did he so soon get rid of his money? I always heard that he had a very large

fortune, and he was not, I believe, addicted to play," demanded one of the party.

"You knew him abroad, Mountserrat, did you not?" asked another of the clique. "How did he get on there?"

"I saw as little of him as I could help, for I never liked him. He was always a formal prig," was the answer of the marquis.

"But did he commit any follies in Italy to account for this unexpected ruin?" asked another.

"Yes, he squandered lots of money on statues."

"I heard from many of his college friends that he was a very generous fellow, and possessed a thousand good qualities," observed a good-looking young man, with fair and curly hair.

"As every fellow who has thousands of pounds at his disposal is said to have," said Lord Mountserrat, looking superciliously. "The good qualities of the rich," continued he, "are never overlooked in London, I assure you, Campbell, and as you are a *very young man*," and the speaker laid a strong emphasis on the three words, "you would do well to remember this fact, as it may render you less credulous with regard to the asserted merits of those you hear lauded."

The colour rose to the face of Mr. Campbell, for he felt the implied sarcasm, but he was not a man to let it pass unnoticed; so, turning to the marquis, he re-

plied, "I cannot quite assent to the justice of your assertion that the rich *always* find people ready to give them credit for good qualities, for I know *some* men," and he looked steadily at Mountserrat, "whose wealth no one doubts, yet of whom no one speaks well."

The marquis bit his lip, but affected not to notice the retort, while some of the group smiled, and exchanged glances with each other.

"You, I believe, Campbell, belong to the self-constituted regenerating patriots of the day," resumed Lord Mountserrat, "one of the articles of whose creed is to defend the weak. You are one of the noble band united for the disinterested purpose of enlightening the world, and protecting the *canaille*."

"And you, my lord marquis," retorted Mr. Campbell, "belong, I suspect, to that portion of the aristocracy—Heaven be praised, it is but small!—who think only of their own pleasures, and are ready to exclaim, as a kingly voluptuary of a neighbouring kingdom once did, '*A prés nous le deluge.*'"

"I do not, I confess, pretend to the sanctity of morals and patriotic aspirations of your set," was the rejoinder. "I do not wish that the lower orders should be taught to read and write, in order that, by keeping false accounts, they may be enabled to rob us with more facility and impunity. Instead of desiring,

as you and your friends do, Mr. Campbell, to lighten the toil and increase the recreations of the *canaille*, my desire would be to leave them as their forefathers were, in their primitive state of ignorance, to wear out their lives in incessant labour, which would prevent their having time to meddle in political discussions, and give trouble to those born to rule them."

"Luckily, for the cause of humanity," replied Mr. Campbell, his face crimsoned with indignation, "the opinions and sentiments you have just uttered are now become so obsolete and unpopular that few would have the hardihood to pronounce them. You have used an expression, too, which, happily, does not exist in our language, and for which we have no synonyme. That word, so insulting, is now no longer spoken even in the country where it originated, and is not at all applicable to the English people—the finest, noblest race, under the sun."

"Bravo! bravo, Campbell!" cried out some few members of the club. "Campbell for ever!" "Campbell, the friend of the people! as your electors styled you."

"And the friend of the people I will remain while I breathe," said Campbell, "and I glory in belonging to that band who would extend the blessing of

education to their poorer brethren, and ameliorate the hardships of their condition."

"I give you joy of the task. The labours of Hercules, in cleansing the Augean stable, will be light compared with yours, if you seek to purify the stolid and polluted minds of the rabble—I use that designation out of deference to your repugnance to the more expressive one, *canaille*."

"I deny that the minds of the English people *are* either stolid or polluted. They require but instruction—and their taste for that is every day becoming more developed—to render them what nature designed them to be, a wise and thinking people, taking a lively interest in the welfare and honour of their country, and contributing largely their share to both."

"This discussion is, I believe, Mr. Campbell, as little amusing to others as to me."

"You provoked it, and ironically styled me a patriot. Would I could deem myself really worthy of the title! I know not how I incurred your ire, unless it was by my stating that I had heard much of the generosity of Mr. Strathern."

"I never saw any proofs to justify this praise," replied Mountserrat, either forgetful of the frequent and liberal assistance formerly extended to him by

Strathern, and never repaid, or else bent on stating a falsehood.

"He nevertheless bestowed a large sum on that poor fellow Olliphant," observed Mr. Campbell, "when those who had won thousands from that unhappy man are said to have refused him a few paltry hundreds with which to try his fortune in a distant land."

"I dare say, this large gift was all a story got up," remarked another. "People are not now-a-days so apt to throw away thousands."

"Assisting an old friend ought not to be termed throwing away money," said Mr. Campbell.

"Depend on it," observed another, "he must have committed numberless acts of folly, besides building that absurd house. He was always a sly fellow, and kept his vices out of public view."

"I understand that he gambled desperately in the funds," said one of the party.

"Very likely, for he was ever of a speculative turn," replied another.

"Some one hinted that he had given a certain foreign duc an enormous sum to prevent his bringing an action of damages against him, when some letters of his to the fair duchesse fell into her husband's hands," said Mr. Crawley.

"Come, come, that must be a tale got up in London,

and by some untravelled scandal-monger, for all who know anything of the Continent must know that actions of damages for sins like that you have mentioned are there unknown."

"You don't mean to say that foreign women are better than our own?" demanded an elderly gentleman with spectacles, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, being occupied in writing a letter.

"Certainly not; I only mean that on the Continent, though ample causes exist for giving work to the gentlemen of the long robe, the frailties of wives are not exposed, to shame a husband and children, and to corrupt the readers of newspapers."

"And so the injured husband, as the phrase goes, is obliged to pocket the affront, and gets no healing plaster for the wound in the shape of five or ten thousand pounds adjudged him by twelve honest men as a compensation for the loss of his wife?"

"Certainly not; such a proceeding on his part would be deemed highly dishonourable."

"But, to return to Strathern," said Mr. Crawley; "some one mentioned, last night, that his ruin was effected by the smash of Messrs. Takein and Cheatall, in whose hands he placed a large capital, to lend out at sixty per cent."

"I can believe anything," observed an elderly man, who had been poring over the pages of a Sunday paper

remarkable for the pungency of its attacks on the highest class.

"But this passes belief," said Mr. Campbell.

"Why so?—others have done the same," was the answer.

"You must not believe everything that Crawley says," remarked one of the group. "He acts on a principle wholly opposed to our English law; for he believes every man guilty of whatever crime he may be accused until the law has pronounced his innocence."

"The only plan to avoid being duped," replied Crawley.

"You saw a great deal of Strathern since he came back," said the Marquis of Mountserrat, addressing Lord Francis Musgrove.

"No, not a great deal."

"Come, Franky, don't be sly;—why deny it?—for I saw you some half dozen times going to his room at the Clarendon."

"Yes," remarked another; "and I met a fellow yesterday who told me that Strathern had accepted bills for you."

"Some accommodation bills have certainly passed between us," replied Lord Francis Musgrove, unblushingly.

"Then you'll be in a pretty scrape," observed the marquis.

"Egad, I fear so!" answered Lord Francis; "but it was devilish wrong of Strathern to take one in, by pretending to be rich."

"Should he get out of limbo, we shall have him asking all his old acquaintance to lend him money," said Crawley.

"What a bore!" remarked one of the party.

"The only way to avoid it is to cut him. I always cut acquaintances when they get ruined," observed Crawley.

"I thought you once experienced some inconvenience from acting on that principle," said the Marquis of Mountserrat.

"Why, it is sometimes rather dangerous, I confess; for poor men are apt to be proud, and resent being cut, as in the case to which you have referred. I should certainly have had a duel on my hands, only that my poor and proud adversary could not, as I had anticipated, find a friend to go out with him, so I got off. But really, jesting apart, a code of laws should be drawn up by us, the *élite* of society, to regulate the course to be pursued in such circumstances."

"A capital notion," said Lord Mountserrat, "and I would have it to run in the following form:—'And be it enacted, that no nobleman or gentleman is to be expected to speak to or answer the letters of any ruined acquaintance, or former friend, or to give him

what is called satisfaction, should he demand it, on the plea of being insulted. And be it further enacted, that any nobleman or gentleman infringing these regulations shall be excluded from this circle."

"Excellent, excellent!" exclaimed several of the party.

"No, no," vociferated Mr. Campbell, indignantly. "Such a code would dishonour humanity, and I know I can count on several of my friends, now absent, who would reject it as disdainfully as I do."

While this *persiflage* was amusing the members of ——'s, Strathern was suffering under all the annoyances to which a proud and sensitive mind is susceptible, under his peculiar circumstances. The news of his arrest had spread, like lightning, round the town. The consequence was, that payment for the few articles purchased since his arrival in London was peremptorily demanded, and he found himself considered and treated as one afflicted with the disease the most dreaded and carefully avoided in London—poverty. Of his *ci-devant* friend, Lord Francis Musgrove, and a host of other worthies of a similar kind, he saw no more, except at a distance in the streets, where they no sooner got a glimpse of him than they quickly retreated in another direction. The Marquis of Mountserrat showed more effrontery, for he coolly looked Strathern in the face, as if he had never previously

beheld him, and passed on. For a moment, Strathern's choler rose, and he was half tempted to follow him and demand satisfaction for this affront, but a little reflection taught him that such a worthless man was beneath his notice, and contempt took the place of anger in his breast.

Another bill of exchange, to a very large amount, was drawn by Lord Delmington on him, of which he was apprised by his bankers, with a notice that to meet it would not only take all the money of his lodged in their hands, but leave him their debtor for some hundreds. That his friend should require such large sums surprised while it greatly embarrassed Strathern, and he was deliberating on what steps he had best take to meet the pressing difficulties of the moment, when a letter reached him from Mr. Papworth, stating that he had, at length, and after many unexpected difficulties, succeeded in finding a person who was ready to lend the sum required to settle with Mr. Drinkwater, on the most reasonable terms, and that the money would be paid down as soon as the deed could be drawn. "This, be assured," wrote Mr. Papworth, "will be a much more advantageous arrangement for you than selling out of the funds when they are so very low as at present, so I earnestly advise you to adopt it."

Strathern wrote his assent to his solicitor, and

settled with his bankers to pay the bill drawn on him by Lord Delmington; not, however, without one of the partners of the firm having taken the liberty of hinting to him that the giving *carte blanche* to draw on him to any friend—nay, even to one's nearest and dearest relation—was an imprudence that few, if any, ever committed without having cause to repent it. The very next post brought a letter from Lord Delmington, stating that he had that day discovered that his courrier had forged his name to two bills of exchange to a large amount, and decamped with the money, leaving the whole of his household bills at Naples unpaid, and himself consequently in great embarrassment. "I must therefore, my dear friend," wrote Lord Delmington, "ask you to lodge one thousand pounds, and send me a letter of credit to that amount, with as little delay as possible, for the robbery of this scoundrel has left me without a sous."

Never could a demand have arrived more inopportunely. What was to be done? To apply to his bankers he knew would be, if not useless, at least humiliating, after the reflection made only the previous day by one of them on the subject of his liberality to this same friend. This renewed demand would confirm their belief in his imprudence, and were he to reveal the cause they would blame him still more for trusting to so careless a person as this transaction

proved Lord Delmington to be. While he was occupied in painful reflections of how he was to meet his friend's wants with as little delay as possible, a waiter entered with the morning papers, one of which Strathern mechanically took up and ran his eyes over, when they became arrested by the following paragraph, headed, in large letters: "Death of the Marquis of Roehampton.—It is our painful task to announce the sudden demise of this excellent and lamented nobleman, which took place at his lordship's seat, Roehampton Castle, on the 29th inst., after an illness of only a few hours. The marquis is succeeded in his titles by his only son, the Earl of Delmington, now on the Continent, where he has been staying for some months for the recovery of his health."

"So here is an end to the embarrassments of my friend," thought Strathern. "Poor fellow! he will feel this event severely, for, stern and unkind as his father was, I know he yearned to be reconciled to him. Now my bankers will, I dare say, make no objection to accommodate the rich Marquis of Roehampton, whatever they might have done to the poor Lord Delmington. I only hope that my friend will live long to enjoy the vast fortune he inherits, and that he will have a son."

Strathern was not disappointed in his expectations. The bankers readily gave a letter of credit for double

the amount Lord Delmington had written to his friend for—Strathern thinking it advisable to send that sum—nay, they even complimented him on the warmth and steadiness of his friendship to the absent marquis, proving that the poor earl of the previous day was viewed in a very different light by them to the rich marquis of the present.

Strathern himself seemed to have risen in their estimation by his friend's accession to wealth and dignity, and by the certainty which this accession afforded of the speedy repayment of the large sums he had so generously advanced to him.

"World! world!" thought he, as, pacing back to his hotel, he pondered on the events of the last few days, "how severe, yet how profitable are thy lessons to those willing to take advantage of them! How little can the rich judge of thee when all thy denizens to them wear ever a smiling countenance, and address them only with courtesy and respect! But let me not censure the world at large, because some of its members have been found unworthy. Should I not rather blame myself for having so ill-chosen my friends? But thus it ever is with those who, guilty of a culpable negligence in the choice of their associates, are disposed to fall into misanthropy, because they find themselves disappointed where, had they been more cautious, they would never have founded any

hopes of a real friendship. Friendship!" thought Strathern, as he continued his meditations; "how grave is the import of the word, yet how lightly is it treated! It is a plant that strikes root only in a fine soil, and requires the rough winds of adversity to test its vigour. The effeminate luxury of our times is destructive to its existence, and it withers and dies in crowded cities, as does some hardy shrub, transplanted from its native earth, where the fresh breeze waved its leaves, to the artificial heat of a conservatory."

On entering his hotel, Strathern found an old gentleman, with a very prepossessing countenance, speaking to the porter.

"Here is Mr. Strathern," said the servant; but the old gentleman, who was deaf, did not hear him.

"My name is Strathern. May I inquire your business with me?"

"Mine, sir, is Vincent—a name probably unknown to you; but if you will favour me with a private interview of a few minutes, I will explain the motive for this intrusion."

Strathern courteously invited him to his room, and leading the way there, they were soon both seated, when Mr. Vincent thus addressed him—

"I am come, sir, to return you my warmest thanks for an act of kindness and generosity on your part

towards a person very dear to me, and in whose welfare I take the most lively interest."

"I am not aware, sir, how I have merited these acknowledgments," replied Strathern.

"When I inform you, Mr. Strathern, that you see before you the uncle of Frederick Olliphant, whom you so generously assisted when ruined by his own folly and association with persons against whom I frequently but unavailingly warned him, you will no longer be at a loss to comprehend my debt of gratitude to you. You must have thought me hard-hearted and unnatural towards my unfortunate nephew, the only son of a dear departed sister, and confided on her death-bed to my care. Believe me, I was not so, but I found it absolutely necessary to appear in that unamiable light, as the sole means of correcting my poor Frederick, and of exposing the selfishness and worthlessness of those supposed friends, from whom not all my counsel and entreaties could wean him. I had twice paid his debts, amounting to no small sums; and the last time with a threat—provoked by his defence of those very persons who had lured him into habits of ruinous extravagance and dissipation, and who had shamelessly profited by his inexperience and folly—to cast him off for ever if he again fell into the courses, from the inevitable results of which I had then, for the second time, rescued him. Even this threat

did not prevent his again becoming the prey of his designing associates. My having twice paid such large sums for him led them to believe that I would still continue ready to extricate him, and pay them the sums they had won from him at play. Their conduct, equally heartless and shameless, effected that which all my advice, entreaties, and menaces had failed to produce, namely, a late, but full conviction of their utter worthlessness, and his own obstinate folly. Ashamed to throw himself once more on my kindness, and writhing under the sense of his sins and their insults, to what fatal step might my poor misguided nephew not have been hurried into, had you, sir, not reached out a hand to save him?" and here the old gentleman's lips quivered with emotion, and he applied his handkerchief to his eyes.

"I was only too happy to be of use to an old friend, of whose goodness of heart I always entertained the highest opinion; and I must add, that the terms of gratitude and affection in which he named his obligations to you, Mr. Vincent, as well as his deep regret for having slighted your counsel, of the wisdom of which he had unhappily but too late become sensible, insured him my good will and regard."

"Did he speak of me with gratitude and affection?" said the old man. "Ah! my poor boy! He little knew how my heart was pained while acting with a

sternness so contrary to my nature, for what I believed to be the only means of opening his eyes to the real characters of those who had led him to ruin. And I, too, Mr. Strathern, misjudged him, for when I discovered, through the medium of a person I employed to find out how he was going on, that he was again plunged in debt, and harassed by his vile associates for the payment of his gambling debts to them, I imagined that his avoidance of me proceeded from hardness of heart, rather than from shame and contrition; and, instead of seeking the poor prodigal, and opening my arms to the penitent, I waited until he would implore the pardon I was ready to grant. But I waited in vain. A letter from on board the ship in which he embarked for Van Diemen's Land, and which was not to reach me until the vessel had sailed, first apprised me of the state of his feelings, his determination to become an exile from his native land, and your bounty, which had enabled him to put his intentions into effect with comfort and respectability.

"The letter was a heartrending one; and you may judge, Mr. Strathern, of my emotions on finding that the only relative I have—the being who, with all his errors, my heart still clung to—had left England for so remote a part of the globe, while I, a poor, old, solitary man, with no one on earth to love but him, was longing to pardon and take him to my arms again.

When I had perused this sad letter, I searched the newspaper to find what day the Fair Rosamond—for so was the ship named—had actually sailed, and judge of my delight when I saw that she had put in at Portsmouth, and was there delayed by contrary winds. O, Mr. Strathern! never before that moment was I sensible of the advantage of railroads. To hurry off and depart by the next train was my first thought. Luckily, I caught it two minutes before it started, and, having reached Portsmouth, I ran to the Point more rapidly than I thought my old legs could ever again move, and found, to my unspeakable joy, that the Fair Rosamond was still wind-bound in the harbour. I instantly entered a boat, was rowed to the ship, and soon found myself in the arms of my poor boy, who, overjoyed to see me, wept like a child on my breast.

"Fain would he persuade me that he was unworthy to be restored to my favour—that he ought to go to the place of his destination, and there prove, by his steadiness and industry, his regret for the past, and his desire to atone for it. I had much difficulty in inducing him to return with me, and it was only by declaring my fixed determination to proceed with him—a step which, at my advanced age, and with my infirmities, would have been most unadvisable—that I won his assent to come on shore with me. He has opened his whole heart to his old uncle, and I

have poured the balm of pity and affection into it. Never did I love him so tenderly as now, and never did I feel so confident of his thorough and enduring reformation.

"It was only a few days ago that we came back to London, and ever since he has been confined to his room by a sprained ankle, or he would have been here ere this, to repeat to you again his and my eternal gratitude for your generosity and continued friendship at a time when he was not only abandoned, but insulted by his worthless companions, and to repay you the sum you so nobly lent him, when there was so little prospect of the poor fellow's being ever able to refund it. Here is the money, sir, and, if it would not be deemed too great a liberty, I would venture to add that should you ever require a loan of ten times its amount, you will ever find me proud and happy to advance it on the shortest notice. My nephew's first visit will be to you, and should you feel disposed to honour him by a call, I need not add what pleasure it will afford him and me to receive one who has proved himself so true a friend."

Mr. Vincent took his departure, leaving Strathern agreeably impressed in his favour, and pleased that his kindness towards his old friend Oliphant had produced so salutary a result.

"Yes," thought he; "all men are not cold-hearted

and selfish, like the *clique* with whom I had the misfortune to fall in. The worthy man whom I have just seen, as well as his nephew, are proofs of this; and an acquaintance with a few such men obliterates from the mind the proneness to misanthropy so apt to be engendered by a contact with the unworthy."

The lessons of adversity, if received in a proper spirit, are admirably calculated, not only to open a man's eyes to the hollowness and deceitfulness of what are called worldly friendships, but also to his own errors. Strathern's trials, though far from being of so serious a nature as those which imprudence have entailed on many an individual of his class, were, nevertheless, sufficiently mortifying to occasion him serious reflections. He saw how rash and foolish he had been in reposing such unlimited confidence in an architect of whom he had no knowledge, save the recommendation of an extravagant man of fashion, as thoughtless as himself; and the penalty induced by this unwise measure made a deeper impression on his mind than all the recriminatory admonitions of Mr. Papworth had effected.

CHAPTER LI.

There's nought on earth more vile and base
Than those who sprung from noble race,
When they, for filthy lucre's sake,
Acquaintance with the low will make,
And hold communion with a mind
By education ne'er refined;
For vulgar great more vulgar far
Than lowly vulgar surely are."

"Well, you must allow, Lord Wellerby, little disposed as you in general are to give me credit, that I have succeeded in securing Olivia a very brilliant marriage," said Lady Wellerby to her lord, as they sat together *téte-à-téte*, the evening of the marriage of their daughter, previous to going to Lady Mountserrat's to play whist.

"You are always so ready to give yourself credit that there is little need of my paying you compliments," replied her surly husband. "Besides, I

think it was the girl's own sharpness that secured the marriage. She had her wits about her, and knew what she was doing."

"But to whom does she owe her sharpness, I should like to know, Lord Wellerby? Is it not to my counsel, to my indefatigable zeal in pointing out to her the path she was to pursue?"

"You only did your duty, and certainly you took many years to catch a husband for Livy. A clever mother would have secured one long ago."

"Yes, if she had a reasonable husband to assist her schemes, and help her to play the fish caught on her bait, and to land them."

"The less men meddle in such work the better. For my part, I could never lend a hand to it, for the recollection of how I was hooked in myself would always prevent me from helping any other poor devil into such a scrape."

"Hooked in, my lord!"

"Yes, hooked in, my lady."

"My position and the numerous excellent offers of marriage I had received precluded the necessity of my condescending to use any arts to secure a husband."

"Why did you use them then?—for use them you positively did."

"Really, Lord Wellerby, you shock and humiliate me by such unfounded assertions."

"Then you should not provoke them. I'll tell you what, Lady Wellerby, I've remarked that whenever you begin to praise your own address and cleverness, it is but a preface to some demand on my purse; and, when I've been so stupid and thoughtless as to assent to your self-commendations, you at once pounce on me with a request for money. You cannot therefore be surprised that I am chary in my praises, knowing the unfair advantage that would be taken of them."

"Well, my lord, as you have *brusqué* the subject of money, without any delicacy to my feelings, I may as well state, without any further circumlocution, that I *am* in great want of some, and that I consider myself fully entitled to demand it after the enormous savings I have effected for you, in making Lord Fitzwarren believe that it was the husband, and not the father, who always furnished the *trousseau* and *corbeille*. Had I not done so, how heavy a sum would you have had to expend? And did I not manage, also, to make him pay for the *déjeûner*, as well as all other expenses incurred for the marriage? a thing never previously done by a bridegroom."

"And so you think the money saved on this occasion ought to find its way into your purse! What would be the advantage of saving on one side, if the savings were to go to the other, I should like to know?"

"You have such an extraordinary way of seeing

things, Lord Wellerby! Can't you comprehend, that if I effect an economy of a large sum, I have a right to expect a per centage on it?"

"It must be a very small per centage, then, I can tell you."

"I do not expect a large one; one hundred pounds would....."

"One hundred devils! Where do you think I am to find hundreds to throw away on you?"

"You must have found them for the *trousseau* and *déjeûner* for our daughter's marriage, had not my address saved you."

"Well, then, how much will satisfy you? As for a hundred pounds, it is wholly out of the question."

"Less than that sum would be inadequate to my wants."

"What your wants can be, hang me, if I can guess! Young women want money to buy finery and dress themselves out; but for old ones, whom no finery can make look well, I can't fancy what they can want money for."

"You will be so good as to remember, my lord, that I am your junior by some years."

"And what difference does that make? I acknowledge myself to be an old man; and, though you may be a couple of years younger—I know you are not more—that does not exempt you from being an old

woman. You have not worn well, either, Lady Wellerby, if the truth must be told, for you look at least seven years older than you are."

"And you, my lord, ten. But what has my age to do in the present question? I want a hundred pounds—a sum too paltry to make such difficulties about."

"If I win at cards to-night, I'll let you have it to-morrow."

"You are sure to win; for you know that your vulgar adversary has not the slightest knowledge of the game. So you may as well give me a cheque for the money now. There is your writing-box, and your cheque-book is in it;" and her ladyship nimbly arose, brought the writing-box, and placed it before him.

He wrote the cheque, grumbling all the time he did so; and, having handed it to his wife, said, "Have you yet arranged for making a new agreement with the master of this hotel for our repasts?"

"No; I have not had time."

"Let it be done then as soon as possible. The reduction in our family will make a considerable difference in our bills. As Sophy has a double-bedded room, your maid can occupy the second bed, and that will save paying for her room."

"Sophy won't approve this arrangement; and, as

my maid's room is nothing more than a closet, I don't think any saving will be effected by it."

"Ascertain this point, and, if you find a few francs, or even pauls, a week can be saved, remember I don't care a pin whether Sophy likes it or not. I wish we could get her off our hands. Daughters, at best, are a great plague to have; for one is obliged to be civil to every puppy or fool who would be a good *parti*, in hopes of catching him; but, when girls are plain, as is the case with ours, they are a heavy weight on one's hands. Sophy, too, is rather plainer than Livy."

"I don't agree with you, for she has something very piquant in her face."

"You say that because she is as like you as possible, Lady Wellerby. The only piquant thing in her face that I can see is a nose so sharp that it looks as if it could cut like a knife."

"Better than have one like a tomato," replied the lady, glancing spitefully at the red nose of her husband, which grew redder at this remark.

"I think, with a little good management, we might arrange to be invited to dinner every day with Lady Mountserrat, instead of having to pay for our dinners at home," said Lord Wellerby, after a few minutes' reflection.

"But only think what a bore it will be."

"Do you call it a bore to get a much better dinner

and wine than we can afford to have at our own expense?"

"If she were less vulgar, it might be bearable, but really she is insupportable."

"Not a bit more so than many of your friends. And, even if she were, good dinners and wine, free of all cost, are worth making some sacrifices for. Try and manage this. Throw out some hints about *our* being so much less well served than she is, and you can add something about our feeling so *triste* without Livy, that we hate sitting down to dinner at home."

"As you wish it, I will, my lord; but indeed I should infinitely prefer poorer fare at home."

"Come, let us be off; it is ten o'clock by my watch. Ring for Sophy to go with us."

The Wellerbys found Lady Mountserrat and her *dame de compagnie* still seated at dessert, with a profusion of rare fruit and wines on the table.

"Bless me, is it so late?" said the marchioness, striking her repeater. "I dined later than usual, for my appetite was spoiled by the wedding breakfast, and yet to pass away the time without dining was more than I could do. What would become of one if the long hours were not broken by ones meals? *Déjeûners* and early dinners always set me wrong for the day, and the only way I can recover myself is to sit down to a late dinner, when all is over, just as if I had

eaten nothing before. Will you have some fruit and a glass of wine, my lord and ladies? it will do you good, depend on it, for you all look as jaded as if you had been up all last night."

Lady Wellerby and her daughter declined the offer; but her lord, reflecting that the more wine his hostess drank, the less able would she be to attend to her whist, he accepted the proffered fruit, and affected to drink the wine, taking care, unperceived by the marchioness, to dilute it plentifully with water.

"I am glad I have some one to keep me in countenance," observed the lady, "for I really feel that I require an extra glass of wine to-day. Weddings are melancholy things—at least, I find them so; but this is only natural in my case, for they must always remind me of my own. Heighho! when I think that I have been but so short a time married, and that, instead of having a loving husband to share my joys and cares, 'to have and to hold for better for worse,' as the parson said, and to have the prospect of a son and heir, who would be a marquis after his father was no more, I stand alone in the world, just as if I had dropped down from the clouds, with no one to care whether I am sick or sorry, I almost wish I had never become a great lady, and had remained poor and contented among my own equals, with whom I might have been happy."

"You must not give way to such gloomy reflections, my dear marchioness; you have friends, and will, doubtlessly, form many more," said Lady Wellerby.

"You are fatigued and nervous; let me recommend you another glass of wine," added her husband.

"Well, I don't care if I try another glass. I don't know what's the matter with me; I don't enjoy my meals as I used to do; and wine, which used to elevate my spirits, now only cheers me for a little while, and then I become lower than ever."

"Living so much alone is the cause, you may be assured, my dear marchioness," answered Lady Wellerby. "You require cheerful society at dinner; friends who would induce you to eat and drink a little more. Society is everything for persons subject to low spirits."

"But how am I to have it, if I don't know people?"

"I'm sure my family would be delighted to give you as much of their company as you wished," said Lord Wellerby.

"Well, then, suppose you all come and dine with me every day while we stay at Naples, and bring any pleasant people you happen to know with you."

"But would not that be trespassing too much on your hospitality, my dear lady? If, indeed, you would dine with us on alternate days," added Lady Wellerby, with one of her most winning smiles, while

her husband looked aghast, lest his wife's rash proposal should be accepted.

"No," replied the marchioness; "let it be as I wish. I prefer dining at home, and will really be glad if you will all dine with me every day; but mind you try and bring some pleasant people with you just for sake of variety, for one gets tired of having always the same faces at dinner, just as one does of having the same dishes;" a truth which the Wellerby family felt it would have been more civil of their hostess to have suppressed. Having, however, gained the point her lord wished, Lady Wellerby cast a triumphant look at him, which expressed, as plainly as a look could do, "See how cleverly I manage everything, and without compromising our dignity either." But her lord affected not to see the glance, or to appear conscious of the success of her scheme, lest it should hereafter be cited against him as a ground for claiming remuneration.

Lady Wellerby and her daughter impatiently waited for the marchioness to leave the *salle-à-manger*, in which the mingled odours of savoury *plats*, fruit, and wine rendered their stay very disagreeable; while Mrs. Bernard, blushing to her very temples at seeing Lady Mountserrat expose her unfeminine *penchant* for wine so openly before strangers, kept casting imploring glances towards her, in order to induce her to leave

the room. The courrier, who knew the predilection of his liege-lady for the pleasures of the table, took care that she should not be interrupted in the enjoyment of them by too early a summons to coffee; it was, therefore, not until the patience of the ladies was quite exhausted that he announced that it was served in the drawing-room; and the marchioness, taking the offered arm of Lord Wellerby, walked with unsteady steps to that apartment. Having done due honour to the copious supply of cakes, served with tea, and Mr. Webworth having made his appearance, Lady Mountserrat said, "Well, as there are four of us, I suppose I *must* play whist; not that the game at all amuses me, for, if the truth must be told, I had rather sit chatting than playing cards."

"Then I hope you will not play on our account," replied Lady Wellerby, "for I should be sorry that you stood on ceremony with us."

Lord Wellerby glanced angrily at his wife, fearing that their hostess might avail herself of this civil speech, and decline cards; but a thought having crossed the half-bewildered brain of that lady that her declining whist might be looked on as originating in a dread of losing her money, she instantly declared that, however bad her luck might be, she was determined to show her visitors that *she* was not to be daunted.

"Thall we cuth for pathneus?" said Mr. Webworth.

"Lord Wellerby and I are such old-fashioned persons that we make it a point always to play together," replied the countess.

"Ith thath quithe fair?" demanded Webworth; "and won't ith be a vewy gweat dithadvantage to your opponenths, playing against two persons, who, having been pathneus so long, must thoroughly know each other's play?"

"That's what I think, too," observed the marchioness, "for I have noticed that my lord and lady always win. Suppose, therefore, we cut for partners, as Mr. Webworth has proposed."

"If you insist on it, certainly," said Lord Wellerby, looking anything but pleased at the proposal.

"Yes, let us cut, let us cut, by all means," rejoined the hostess, suiting the action to the word, and, to her great satisfaction, it was decided by the drawing of the cards that she was to be the partner of Lord Wellerby, while his lady became the partner of Mr. Webworth.

"What are you dreaming of, Mrs. Bernard?" demanded the marchioness, looking angrily at her *dame de compagnie*. "Don't you see that Lady Sophia wants something to divert her? Open them books—I forget what you call them—that have the pretty pictures in 'em. And pretty they ought to be; for they cost me a mint of money. Would you believe it,

Lady Sophia? every drawing in that book, for all they are so small, and have so little bright colours in 'em, cost me twenty—ay, and thirty pounds a piece: for when I heard that the Duchess of Castle Bellingham had employed the best painters to make a book for her, I determined that I'd have as good a one. Not that I care a pin about pictures, but just to let people see that I'd have as dear a picture-book as her." Lady Sophia seated herself at a table, on which Mrs. Bernard, having drawn out the beautifully-bound album from its morocco case, placed it, and began turning over the leaves.

"What queer people poets are!" observed Lady Mountserrat. "When I heard that the Duchess of Castle Bellingham had a book all filled with poems, written in it by the greatest poets of the day, I thought I'd have one, too, and I made my *dam de company* write to all those whose names I could learn, to offer them their own terms for a copy of verses to be made on me, and written in my book. Would you believe it, ladies and gentlemen?—not one of them ever answered the letters; though why they should not write for my money as readily as they do when a publisher pays 'em I can't imagine; or why they should not be paid for verses as painters are for drawings, I can't make out."

"I must entreat your attention to the game, dear Lady Mountserrat," observed Lord Wellerby.

"Oh, botheration to the game!" was the answer, the wine she had drunk now beginning to show its effects on the lady.

"Her ladyship has wenounced," said Mr. Webworth.

"Is it me? Not I!—I never renounced in all my life, so don't be charging me with any such crime. I'm above doing anything low or mean of the kind," and the lady's colour assumed the tint of a peony from anger, at what she considered to be an accusation of unfair play.

"Bless me, madam! I never meant to insinuate anything in the leath offenthive," replied Mf. Webworth. "You wevoked thwough mistake, while you were speaking about your album."

"And couldn't you say so at first? There's nothing affronting in saying I revoked — every one knows that. But when you say I renounced, it's quite a different thing."

There was something so very comical in Webworth's look of utter astonishment at this speech, that, albeit unused to indulge in laughter, Lady Wellerby could not control her risibility, though her husband cast an angry glance at her.

"What's the joke, my lady?" demanded the mar-

chioness. "It must be something mighty good, for I never saw you laugh before. Let us have a share in it."

Lord Wellerby felt on thorns, and though very unwilling to lose the game he was playing, which the fact of Lady Mountserrat's having revoked would occasion, he was hardly sorry when Mr. Webworth again reminded him that the revoke made Lady Wellerby and him the winners.

"Well, I can afford to lose—that's one comfort," observed the lady, somewhat ruffled, however, by the loss of the game; but when, on commencing the next, she misdealt, Lord Wellerby began to think that he was now likely to suffer for having encouraged her to drink wine, for it became evident to him that she hardly knew the cards she had been playing.

"The worse luck now, the better another time," said the marchioness; "and I have such confidence in Lord Wellerby's play that I am willing to bet twenty—ay, twenty-five pounds on the rubber, either with Lady Wellerby or her partner."

"I am willing to bet," replied Mr. Webworth; "but, as we have won one game of the rubber, I must bet you the odds."

"What's the odds to me? I offered you a fair bet, and now you sit there higgling about it, as if I wanted to take an unhandsome advantage of you."

"You mistake me, I assure your ladyship."

"Not at all. First you accuse me of renouncing, which certainly was not very polite to a lady, and of my high rank, too; and now you refuse—at least hum and haw about betting with me."

"I'll take your bet, dear Lady Mountserrat," said Lady Wellerby, eagerly. "Twenty-five pounds on the rubber, if you please. We ladies understand each other better than gentlemen do. They are always plaguing about the odds."

"I'll make it fifty, instead of twenty-five pounds, just to show this gentleman," and she glanced disdainfully at Mr. Webworth, "that I don't value money, and that I don't nor won't bother my brains about odds and ends. So mind, Lady Wellerby, our bet is fifty pounds."

"It is quite understood," replied the lady, as she assorted her cards carefully, and with eager eyes took in the trumps.

"Well, people may call this what they will," observed Lady Mountserrat, her face getting more red, her eyes darting angry flashes, her right foot beating time on the carpet, and her coarse red fingers clumsily twitching the cards, "but if this be pleasure, I don't know what the word means. I'd rather give up the game at once than sit looking at such a horrid hand."

Lord Wellerby bit his lip. "Pray don't despair,

dear madam," observed he, making a violent effort to subdue his anger.

"Despair, indeed! — who told you I despaired? All I meant was that I hate bad cards. Here's the only trick I can make," and the lady threw down the ace of trumps.

"Oh, why did you lead trumps?" asked Lord Wellerby.

"Because I liked it, and if that reason doesn't satisfy you, because I had but one, and wished to make them," nodding at her adversaries, "play down two for it."

Again Lady Mountserrat revoked, and the rubber was lost.

"We have won two bumpers," exclaimed Mr. Webworth.

"And I have won fifty pounds," said his partner.

"Then if *you* have won two bumpers, I don't see why my lord and I shouldn't have two also. For my part, I never felt so thirsty in my life; I suppose it is from that devilled chicken I ate at dinner. Ring the bell, Mrs. Bernard, and order some iced champagne."

"I'll settle my points with Lady Wellerby," said her lord.

"Then I suppose I'm to pay you, Mr. What's-your-name. How much is it?"

"Only ten guineas, as we did not bet on the rubber."

"And fifty pounds to me," said Lady Wellerby.

"Ay, *you'll* be sure not to forget it," replied the marchioness, "for this is the second time within the last three minutes, that you've told me of it."

"I was not aware that I had named it before."

"I thought as much," observed Lady Mountserrat, winking her eye, and her countenance assuming an expression of broad humour, that provoked a laugh even from the grave Webworth, and a smile from Lord Wellerby. "I'm sure if I forgot the dirty half hundred, as the people in Ireland used to call the 50th regiment of foot, you'd never be the woman to say a word more about it. Not you, in troth, for *you* don't care about money, and would just as soon *lose* as *win*!"

Unaccustomed to this coarse mode of bantering, Lady Wellerby felt exceedingly embarrassed under it, but dreaded provoking a new attack, by making any answer.

"Bring me my cheque-book, that I may pay Lady Wellerby, for fear her ladyship's memory should fail her about it. Mr. Bebworth, or Webworth, here's your money, and with it let me give you one piece of advice—never accuse a lady of renouncing, for no lady of real rank will stand it, I can tell you, although

some may pass it over for once in a way, if they happen to be in their own houses or apartments, which are much the same, just to show that they understand good breeding."

"I weally, madam, musth noth allow your ladyship to wemain under a false impwession with wegard to what I said."

"Then would you have me doubt my own ears? Didn't I hear the word?"

"Yeth, madam, but you have mistaken its meaning."

"Thank you, sir; I'm sure it's very polite of you to tell me I don't understand English."

"Weally, madam, you quite pain me by such a supposition."

"Now, how would you like it if I was to tell you that you lisp so much that I can hardly make out what you say? would you think it genteel of me? Yet, it's the honest truth, though I'm too polite to say such a thing."

Mrs. Bernard now returned with the cheque-book, and the marchioness told her to write a cheque for fifty pounds, to which she would put her signature.

"Was it not guineas?" asked Lady Wellerby. "I thought we always betted in guineas."

"Always when *you* win, my lady," replied the

marchioness, winking and nodding; "so guineas let it be. Write down guineas, Mrs. Bernard."

The cheque written out, Lady Mountserrat signed and handed it to Lady Wellerby.

"Is it quite right, ma'am?" asked she. "Are you sure there's no mistake?"

"I dare say it is perfectly correct," replied Lady Wellerby, affecting not to examine it.

"Well, if you'd 'own the truth, and shame the devil,' you'd confess that there is not a lady of all your acquaintance that stands losing fifty guineas as well as I do."

"All ladies of high breeding lose their money without losing their tempers," observed Lady Wellerby, piqued into the remark by the insulting glances of her hostess.

"Do they, indeed! Well, I'm mighty glad to hear it, and I'd be gladder still to see it; for, as your ladyship is the only lady of high breeding I ever played cards with, and as you always, by some chance or another, happen to win, I have had no opportunity of judging how you'd stand losing."

The champagne now made its appearance, and a large glass being filled for the marchioness, she raised it to her lips, nor withdrew it until it was empty.

"There's nothing like champagne, after all," said

she. "Won't you have a glass, my lady, and you, Lady Sophia? 'Twill do you good."

"I'll take a little mixed with iced water, if you will permit me," replied Lady Wellerby.

"Now, don't you think it a sin and a shame to spoil fine wine, that costs so much, by mixing it with water?"

"I never drink plain wine, neither does my daughter."

"Oh! you don't, don't you? More fools you and she. You'd look a deuced sight better if you did, I'm quite sure, so the sooner you begin the better. I always wondered what made you look so half dead and alive, with your eyes for all the world like those of a dead cod-fish; but now that you tell me you never drink any plain wine, I know the cause."

Lady Wellerby's pale face turned red with anger, which her hostess observing, and now growing reckless, as the effect of a second large bumper of champagne began to make itself felt on her, she burst into a loud laugh, and exclaimed: "Now only look at her ladyship, see what a fine colour she has got. If merely talking to you of champagne makes you so red, only think what drinking it would do. Do be advised by me, and take a glass."

"I have always disliked wine, madam," said Lady Wellerby, unable any longer to control her

anger, "and my acquaintance with your ladyship has not decreased my horror of its effects on women."

"Oh! it hasn't, has it? Well, though you have wrapped up your speech in genteel words, just for all the world as you English cover up potatoes in damask napkins, though they are not any better for the finery, I am quite sure you meant to be uncivil to me; and, as you say your dislike to wine has increased since you knew *me*, I'll just take the liberty to tell you that my dislike to grand ladies has increased terribly since I've known *you*."

"Lord Wellerby, I think it's quite time for us to retire," said Lady Wellerby, rising, with an air of affected dignity, from her chair.

"I am sure," replied his lordship, looking daggers at his wife, "that Lady Mountserrat had no intention of offending you, and consequently I must make peace between you."

"Why, it was she who offended me. Who began it, I should like to know?" asked the marchioness.

"My dear lady, permit me to be the peacemaker. Lady Wellerby, I am quite sure, would not, on any account, say or do anything to occasion you the least pain. Allow me to place this fair hand," and he took the coarse red one of his hostess in his, "in the hand of Lady Wellerby."

"I never meant the least offence," murmured Lady Wellerby, approaching the marchioness, who extended her hand, saying, "I never bear malice, so shake hands — but mind you, only on one condition, and that is, that you drink my health in a glass of plain wine before we part. You shall have your own choice of the liquor."

Lord Wellerby made signs to his wife instantly to accede to the terms of reconciliation proposed; and she, reflecting on the chance of future wagers to be won from the obtuse and vulgar Irishwoman, yielded her assent.

"Suppose we have a bit of supper together," said the marchioness, rubbing her hands, and looking "on hospitable thoughts intent." "A broiled bone, devilled legs of chickens, broiled ham, and anything else that can be had, and make a jolly night of it."

"And play another rubber of whist to give you your revenge," added Lord Wellerby.

"No, no more cards to-night," replied the marchioness, "for I feel, somehow or another, rather bothered in the head, and card-playing would only make me worse. To-morrow evening I will play as many rubbers as you like."

"Then, as your head aches, my dear madam," said the peer—seeing that nothing more was to be had out of his hostess that night—"I must advise your

retiring early to your pillow, and not supping, and I must insist on our leaving you to your repose. Good night, good night;" and off went the party, leaving the marchioness to sup alone.

CHAPTER LII.

When Hymen's torch by Love's not lit,
No happiness can wedlock give;
And Time in vain will strive to knit
Hearts doom'd in discord still to live:
For Love alone the charm contains
To cover o'er with blooming flow'rs
The bonds which else are galling chains,
And make them light through all life's hours.

Little of interest marked the journey of the bride and bridegroom, the Earl and Countess of Fitzwarren, from Naples to Paris. The object for which the adroit flatteries of the lady had been so constantly exercised having been attained, she no longer thought it necessary to continue them, or even to show the husband any one of those numerous attentions which it had been her wont to heap on the lover. His carelessness and indifference before marriage had wounded her vanity and piqued her self-love, and, goaded on

by the recollection, she, with a short-sighted policy that argued as little for her understanding as for her good nature, was disposed to prove her resentment for former slights on his part, by now evincing a coldness and negligence towards him on hers.

Nor was Lord Fitzwarren slow to mark the change. Though an obtuse man in some things, he was not an unfeeling one in aught that regarded the affections, consequently he was hurt to observe the change in his wife's manners; but, with the good-nature peculiar to him, joined to the vanity from which no man is exempt, he was willing to find an excuse for it in the jealousy which he suspected might have originated in her breast from the recollection of his unlover-like apathy before their nuptials.

"Poor thing," would he sometimes say to himself; "I dare say she is tormented by the memory of my former coldness, or perhaps she has discovered how desperately in love I was with another. Ah! if that other had but smiled on me, how happy, how unutterably blessed should I now have been! Only to fancy Louisa Sydney as my bride, seated by me in this carriage, and whirled along as rapidly as four horses could draw us, makes my heart beat quicker. To gaze on her beautiful profile, and then to look in the front glass for the reflection of her full face, oh, what rapture would it be! No, never was there so lovely,

so angelic a creature. But I must try to banish her from my thoughts—must remember that the happiness of another is now committed to my care; that I have sworn before the altar to love and cherish her who now bears my name, and that I am guilty of a sin in thus allowing my thoughts to wander to the only woman I ever really loved. How indulgent should the consciousness of these very thoughts render me towards the spleen and coldness of poor Livy! Women, I have always heard, are so wonderfully quick-sighted in affairs of the heart, that who knows if my unhappy bride may not at this very moment be enduring pangs sharper than those I feel!—for jealousy, as I know by experience, can inflict torture. Poor Livy! Although I cannot command my heart to love you, I will at least endeavour to conceal the passion that still lurks there for another, and I will bear with patience the sullenness and coldness which jealousy prompts, conscious that I cannot requite your affection."

What a healing salve is vanity! Without its soothing influence how much less kind should we be, and how much sooner should we perceive facts, that, shaded by its opaque veil, escape detection. But, although vanity frequently interposes a veil between painful truths and our common sense, it also adds poignancy to the discovery of aught that humiliates

our self-love. Thus, while in the good-natured Lord Fitzwarren it rendered him so pitying and forbearing towards the change of manner in his countess, in *her* it produced the most contrary effect, and, instead of conciliating his esteem by a continuance of those attentions and that display of tenderness which had lured him to become her husband, she seemed bent on letting him perceive that his former indifference was now quite equalled by her own.

"You don't enjoy travelling, Livy, I fear," observed Lord Fitzwarren, after a long silence, during which his thoughts had wandered to one who occupied them much more frequently than was consistent either with his duty or happiness, as the husband of another.

"Not particularly," was the reply. "To enjoy travelling, one must have a lively companion, and I don't think you are peculiarly so."

"Yes, she has divined the subject of my thoughts, and is jealous, poor soul," thought the bridegroom. "Do you like Paris?" resumed he, desirous of keeping up a conversation, to atone for his previous silence.

"I can hardly say; for Paris to me was always a scene of trial. I saw around me on every side a thousand pretty things I longed, but had not the power, to buy, and this put me out of temper."

"You will now, my dear Livy," and he took her hand and pressed it, "see Paris under more agreeable

auspices; for it will give me pleasure to enable you to buy all that you fancy."

No returned pressure of the hand, no kind word or look, denoted her gratitude for this good-natured declaration, and her husband felt disappointed at her ungraciousness. Nevertheless, determined to enact the amiable, he resumed.

"I have always thought that one of a man's enjoyments, during the first months of marriage, is the pleasure of loading his bride with pretty things. Women are so differently treated, with regard to pecuniary matters, during their maidenly days to what men are—we being accustomed to have large sums at our disposal, and to expend money as our fancy prompts, without having to consult or render an account to any one; while you are seldom allowed a liberal supply of pocket-money, and, even in the expenditure of the sum allotted, have in general to be guided by the advice of mothers."

"Very true; and this is one of the reasons which makes girls so anxious to be married that they overlook many defects in him who has the means of gratifying their tastes and furnishing the advantages for which they have so long pined."

There was something so heartless and selfish in this observation that Lord Fitzwarren, feeling hurt by it, relapsed again into silence. He was

tempted to say that he hoped all women were not influenced by such interested motives in entering the married state, but he feared such an observation might imply that he was offended or captious, so he remained silent.

"What a bore travelling is!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren; "I wish I had thought of bringing some amusing novel with me."

This rude speech carried neither oil nor wine to the wound inflicted by her previous ones, and, notwithstanding Lord Fitzwarren's extreme good nature, disposed him but little to make any further efforts to maintain a conversation with his bride. Was it possible that he had been the dupe of a woman who had lured him into marriage by pretending an affection for him, that it was but too clear, from her present conduct, she had never really entertained? was the painful reflection that now entered his mind. The ill-humour originating in jealousy he could readily pardon, for there was nothing offensive to his self-love in that; but to be the victim to a heartless creature, whose person had never attracted him, and who only caught him by affecting a boundless attachment, and an entire submission to his will, was so humiliating, that his pride was wounded to the quick by the supposition, and he execrated his own folly and weakness in having been so duped.

Lord Fitzwarren was not prone to indulge long in reflection. Hitherto he had been wont to gratify every desire that arose in his breast that money could accomplish, and it was only when rejected by Miss Sydney that he found there were some blessings that wealth could not secure. His reflections on that discovery were so painful that he fled from them to the society of the Ladies Wellerby, whose flatteries soothed his wounded vanity, and gained for one the prize they had both so long and assiduously sought. But if now, having paid so heavy a price for the flattery, it was to be henceforth withheld from him, and, in its place, an undisguised indifference and rudeness adopted, how should he support so cruel and unexpected a change? Painful thoughts have in general the effect of banishing sleep, but whether it was their novelty or the drowsiness often produced by unbroken silence, and the rapid movement of a carriage, which occasioned the disposition to slumber in this instance, we are not prepared to say; but the fact was, Lord Fitzwarren *did* fall asleep, and by certain nasal sounds soon gave proof that he was actually under the benign influence of Morpheus.

"Lord Fitzwarren, Lord Fitzwarren!" exclaimed his wife, shaking him rudely by the arm, "will you have done snoring?"

He started, rubbed his eyes, and said, "Did I indeed snore?"

"Snore!" reiterated the lady, looking daggers; "I never heard such sounds before. To sleep in a carriage, leaving me to my own reflections, and they are anything but pleasant, I can assure you, was bad enough, but to snore as you have done is so wholly insupportable that, rather than again submit to it, I must give up travelling in the same carriage with you."

"I am sorry I annoyed you," replied Lord Fitzwarren. "I was not aware that I snored, for, though I have had several travelling companions, no one of them ever accused me of this disagreeable infirmity."

"Probably not, as you generally were accompanied by some led captain, some toady, like Mr. Webworth, who, not being able to have a carriage of his own, was too glad to be offered a seat in yours, to complain of any of your peculiarities, however disagreeable they might be."

"Led captains! toadies! Really, madam, I know not whether you most surprise or offend me, by the style you have adopted."

"And I, my lord, can assure you, that the specimen you have given me of your agreeability as a travelling companion will preclude my ever again trusting myself in a post-chaise with you for more than fifty miles as long as I live. What would the world say, I should like to know, if it were told that a bridegroom, ere three days married, sank back in his seat to sleep,

snoring as only some huge dog after a great fatigue does, while his unfortunate wife was left to think on her humiliating position?"

"Do not provoke me into recrimination, madam, lest I utter truths in a moment of anger that you as well as I may afterwards wish unsaid."

"Pray, put no more constraint on your words, my lord, than you have on your actions. Nothing that you can say could be more offensive than your resigning yourself to sleep and snoring. Such conduct proves a total disregard not only of my feelings, but of the common decencies of life!"

"I am ready to admit, madam, that it was not polite, but the fault was not entirely mine. I endeavoured to beguile the route by conversing, but you gave so little encouragement to my efforts to maintain a conversation, and seemed so little disposed to contribute your share, that it is hardly to be wondered at that it dropped, and that I fell asleep."

"I require no apologies, my lord, so pray offer none."

"Do not provoke me too far, Lizzy;" and Lord Fitzwarren's lips became tremulous and his face pale, as he uttered the caution.

"Lest you should forget that I am a woman and you a gentleman, I suppose," replied the lady with a withering glance.

"No, you have no personal violence to dread from me, madam. No provocation could make me forget what is due to your sex, and my own"—and Lord Fitzwarren spoke no more.

The angry feelings engendered on this occasion rankled in the breasts of both husband and wife so strongly that on the slightest cause they were ready to burst into a flame; and Lady Fitzwarren, actuated by the love of domineering, and a belief that by not yielding any deference to her husband's wishes or opinions during the first year of their union, she should ultimately acquire a perfect ascendency over him, and secure her own unquestioned independence, took no step towards conciliation. Never was a *tête-à-tête* journey so unsocial, or repasts so wholly unchecred by good will, or those little attentions that give them their greatest charms, as was this first journey of Lord and Lady Fitzwarren; but as all journeys, like that of life, must end, they at length reached Paris, where it had been determined to make a stay of some weeks, but not without having on the route made some discoveries that led to their being mutually convinced how utterly unsuited they were to each other. The discovery was much more painful to the gentleman than to the lady, for *he*, deceived by the readiness with which, previous to their ill-assorted marriage, she had adopted all his opinions, and affected

to participate in his tastes, expected to find not only a fond wife, but a partial admirer. Her flatteries had won him, and he anticipated a continuance of the same honeyed food, which the lady, now that she had achieved her object, was no longer disposed to furnish.

They took up their abode in the Hotel de Terrace, Rue de Rivoli, where their courrier had engaged the best suite of rooms; and here the lady first began to experience the long-desired advantages of being the wife of a nobleman of large fortune. Ere she had left her dressing-room, the morning after her arrival, the ante-room to it was filled with *modistes*, silkmercers, *cordonniers*, and *couturières*, with the choicest specimens of their respective wares, in compliance with the instructions of *madame la comtesse*, forwarded to them through the medium of her courrier before she had arisen from her pillow.

When Lord Fitzwarren, on leaving his room, beheld the levée that was waiting to have an audience with his wife, he ventured to knock at her door, and entreat that she would postpone seeing these persons until after breakfast, as he was very hungry, and consequently impatient for that repast.

"Don't wait for me," said his lady bride, "for I shall breakfast in my dressing-room."

"Do, pray, let us breakfast together," urged his lordship, "for I hate breakfasting alone."

"And I hate breakfasting with any one; so you must never expect me to share that matinal meal."

"But won't you let me see the pretty things you are going to buy, and let me give you some of my selection?"

"No, thank you, I like to please myself, and men know nothing at all of such matters."

"They are only good to pay for finery, I suppose," thought the mortified husband, as he entered the breakfast-room, and rang to order his *déjeûner*. "And let me have the Galignani newspaper," said he to the servant.

"*Madame la comtesse* has it in her room, milord," was the reply.

He went again to the door of his wife's dressing-room, and requested she would lend him the newspaper.

"I have not yet read it," was the answer.

"But you can't read it while you are dressing or examining the various things brought for your inspection," observed Lord Fitzwarren, "and I will send it back to you in a quarter of an hour."

"How can you be so tiresome?" replied the lady. "I really cannot allow you to have it, so do let me dress."

Lord Fitzwarren returned to the breakfast-room, but no symptoms of *déjeûner* appearing, he tried to

beguile the time by looking out of the window, beating time on the panes, chasing the flies—he was too humane to kill them—and whistling, not for want of thought, but with the desire to get rid of some very disagreeable ones which filled his mind.

"Well, this *is* pleasant, it must be confessed," thought he, but the expression of his countenance betrayed that there was really nothing pleasant in his position. "Here I am alone and neglected. As a single man, I never felt so uncomfortable, for then I always had some pleasant fellow to breakfast with me, the newspapers laid on my table, and was not kept kicking my heels about as at present." He rang the bell angrily, and commanded his courrier to be sent to him. When that person made his appearance, Lord Fitzwarren, more angrily than he had ever addressed him before, demanded "why his breakfast was not served, and the newspaper not on his table?"

"Vera sorre, milord, *mais* miladi commanded dat de journal be always sent to her de first, and commanded de *déjeûner* to be served in her dressing-room, so I tought milord vould breakfast vid miladi dere. But I vill go and have de *déjeûner* served here *toute-de-suite*," and off ran the *courrier*, saying to himself, "Ah! *pauvre* milord, *pauvre* milord! He not de first to be served now, miladi *she* de first vill have everyting for herself, and not care von pin for any-

body else in de vorld. *Mechante femme, mechante femme!*"

When Lord Fitzwarren had got through his solitary breakfast, and never had he enjoyed one so little, the *menu* for dinner was presented by the *courrier*, who said, "Miladi has commanded de *plats* she prefers, but I tought milord would like to order sometings for himself."

Lord Fitzwarren made a few additions to the bill of fare, and then deputed the *courrier* to inquire of Mademoiselle Claudine, the *femme de chambre* of his wife, at what hour Lady Fitzwarren desired the carriage to be ready, and whether she wished him to accompany her.

"Miladi not vant milord at all," was the answer brought back; "and de carriage is to be at de door at two o'clock."

The husband bit his lip, and left the hotel in anything but a good humour, heartily wishing that he had never beheld his countess, or that the chain that bound him to her was not indissoluble.

"I used not to think her so ugly as she now appears in my eyes," thought he, as he strolled up the Place Vendome. "When I was such a fool as to propose to her, I really thought her tolerable. But then she was all smiles, and so good-natured and civil that it was impossible to think her ugly."

Flattery is so agreeable and intoxicating a draught that it not only deceives those to whom it is administered, with regard to their own qualities, but induces them to believe that those who offer it are agreeable. How can people regard those who render them pleased with themselves with any other than pleasurable emotions? Lady Fitzwarren's adulation blinded her lord to her plainness, but now that it was offered to him no more, he became painfully sensible of the fact. Occupied by painful thoughts, he was glad when he met an old acquaintance, Sir Henry Elgood, in the street. This gentleman, like himself, was whiling away the time by a ramble, so they joined company, and, at the request of Lord Fitzwarren, proceeded to the stables of the horse-dealers. The sight of a few fine steeds charmed the peer; and, as he descanted on their respective merits, he almost forgot that there was such a person in the world as his wife, nay, even that he was married.

It was half-past four o'clock before Lady Fitzwarren descended from her dressing-room, and so great was the metamorphosis effected in her appearance by her adoption of the latest *modes de Paris*, that she was hardly to be recognised for the same plain and ill-dressed person whose attire had the previous evening excited the derision not only of the proprietors of the hotel, but of their *laquais*. Charmed with her own

appearance, her first thought was to visit the best *magazins des modes* in person, in order to select a large supply of caps, hats, turbans, and bonnets, in which, after first figuring in Paris, she should excite general admiration in London. Robes for morning, dinner, and evening parties of the most costly description were ordered; and, before the hour for returning to her hotel had struck, she had expended a sum so large that even the most liberal husband, in the fond delirium of the honeymoon, must have looked grave had he examined the amount of the sum total. To leave her name at the British Embassy, and at the doors of some English acquaintances then domiciled at Paris, was the next step taken, for the countess longed to emancipate herself from the *tête-à-têtes* with her lord, and to exhibit the finery she had purchased, in circles where its research and expense should be duly appreciated. She had in the morning, without apprising her lord of the circumstance, ordered a box to be engaged at the Italian Opera; while he, having heard much from his friend, Sir Henry Elwood, of the unrivalled comic powers of an actor then performing at the Porte St. Martin, took a box there, and invited his friend to dine with and accompany Lady Fitzwarren and him to that theatre.

The gaiety of the moving scene around him—a gaiety, the influence of which even the most grave of

his countrymen are compelled to acknowledge—had produced a salutary effect on the spirits of Lord Fitzwarren. His habitual good nature had triumphed over the annoyances of the preceding days and that morning; and he was ready to overlook the neglect of his comfort so unceremoniously exhibited by his wife, had he but found her the least disposed to atone for it by present kindness or good breeding. She had not returned when he entered the hotel; but the ante-room, filled with bandboxes of every possible shape, bore evidence how her time had been occupied since they had last met. He dressed, looked often at the pendule on the chimney-piece, and compared it with his watch, as half hour after half hour wore away, without her making her appearance.

Sir Henry Elwood had arrived at the time named for dinner; and his friend saw, or fancied he saw, as much surprise as dissatisfaction expressed in his countenance when the fact of Lady Fitzwarren not having yet returned home to dress, was revealed. At length she returned, but at an hour that precluded the possibility of their being in time for the piece at the Porte St. Martin. Her husband met her in the ante-room, told her that he had engaged an old friend to dinner, who was then waiting to be presented to her, and entreated her to be as expeditious as possible in dressing.

"What, my lord," said she, her face assuming a frown ominous of gathering wrath, "is it possible that you can have committed such a solecism in good breeding as to invite a person to dinner whom I have never seen? This is too glaring a breach of respect towards me; and, to prove my sense of it, I shall not appear at dinner."

"Not appear at dinner!" reiterated Lord Fitzwarren. "You surely cannot be so unreasonable or unkind towards me! My friend was at the window, and saw you come home; therefore, I cannot say you are ill. Let me entreat you, Livy, to be present at dinner. Pray do, and save me from the mortification of letting my friend see how little you value my feelings."

"Before I accede to your request, Lord Fitzwarren, you must promise me that you will never again engage any person to dine with whom I am not acquainted—nay, more, that you will not invite any one without my permission."

"I promise," replied the henpecked husband, ready to make any sacrifice to ensure the presence of his wife at table, and to prevent his friend seeing how ill he and his bride already got on together.

The lady was in no hurry to complete her toilette; and two hours had nearly elapsed since her commencement of it before she made her appearance in the draw-

ing-room. The time had appeared even double that length to her husband—not from his impatience to behold her, but from the cravings of hunger, and from observing that his friend was suffering from the same cause. He caught Sir Henry Elwood repeatedly looking at the pendule on the mantelpiece, as half hour after half hour rolled away without bringing the lady; and, although the baronet was too well-bred a man to express the annoyance he felt, it was, unconsciously on his part, evident in his countenance.

When Lady Fitzwarren did at last make her entrance, a cold bow and formal courtesy in acknowledgment of the presentation of her husband's friend alone marked her sense of his presence. Not a single word of excuse for her prolonged toilette, and the consequent delay of dinner, escaped her lips, and her whole manner and demeanour impressed Sir Henry, beyond the power of doubt, that he was indeed an unwelcome guest to his hostess.

"I had intended a surprise for you, Livy," said Lord Fitzwarren, as soon as he had rung the bell to order dinner to be served.

"Indeed!" replied the lady. "And may I inquire what it was first; however, informing you that I have a mortal aversion to all surprises?"

Sir Henry Elwood looked abashed, for he felt that his presence at the dinner-table, as a surprise, and by

no means an agreeable one, was included in the lady's unequivocal declaration of dislike to all surprises, while Lord Fitzwarren's good-natured face betrayed that he, too, felt the insinuation.

"Oh! the intended surprise was simply my taking a box at the Porte St. Martin, where I heard the best comic actor of the day was to perform to-night; and I thought you would like to go there, but the performance must have been half over before you were dressed."

"I should not have gone in any case," replied the lady, "for I detest the Porte St. Martin, and take no pleasure in comic pieces; besides, I had ordered a box to be taken for me at the Theatre Italien."

Her husband bit his lip with vexation at this proof of his wife's total independence of his plans or wishes exhibited before his friend, but he only observed that even for the Theatre Italien he feared they should be too late.

"Not at all," replied Lady Fitzwarren; "nothing is so vulgar as going early to such places." And, having now bestowed a scrutinizing glance on the baronet, and satisfied herself that his appearance was sufficiently *distingué* to admit of his being seen in her box, she added, "We shall be in time for as much of the opera as I desire to see."

Dinner was served, and, as might be anticipated, from being two hours later than it was ordered for, was

not eatable. A spoilt dinner and ill-tempered hostess are not calculated to make that repast pass agreeably. The two gentlemen felt this; and the lady, piqued at discovering by his reserve that she had not made a pleasing impression on her guest, made no effort to keep up conversation. She pronounced the cookery to be abominable, forgetful that her delay had permitted no fair trial to be made of the skill of the artist; and glad were her husband and his guest when, coffee being served, and the carriage announced, the lady retired to put on her shawl, and they sought a consolation for their bad dinners in a glass of liqueur.

"Never marry, Elwood," said Lord Fitzwarren, with a sigh so deep as to convince his friend that the advice came from his heart. "There's no managing women be assured; they are fifty times more difficult to be kept in order than the most restive horses. You remember Fanny? Ah! I shall never like any creature as I did her!"

CHAPTER LIII.

The high-born oft can vanquish pride,
When sordid views their actions guide,
Unless by principle they're taught
Some favours are too dearly bought,
If paid for at the heavy cost
Of self-respect, for ever lost.

Among the many habits of Mademoiselle Justine, which a moralist, nay, which even a less severe person, might not approve, was one of peeping through keyholes and listening at doors, in order to ascertain what passed when she was excluded from the presence of her mistress. This habit enabled her to form a pretty accurate notion of what occurred, and often furnished her with subjects to amuse her acquaintances, at the expense of her lady and her guests. She had observed through her peep-hole the slight misunderstanding between her mistress and Lady Wellerby, as well as the signs made by Lord Wellerby to his

wife when he wished her to conciliate that lady, and this confirmed the suspicions of the artful *femme de chambre* that the family had some interested designs on the marchioness, which she determined to circumvent by every means in her power. Fearful of any persons acquiring over her mistress an influence that might in the least interfere with her own, Mademoiselle Justine had seen, with alarm and dissatisfaction, the growing intimacy between the Wellerbys and Lady Mountserrat. My lord and lady she suspected of views on the purse of her mistress by card-playing, and Lady Sophia she believed had projects, by flattery, of obtaining presents, to which she, Mademoiselle Justine, thought herself much better entitled.

"Already," said the Frenchwoman to herself, "that cunning old maid has induced *ma bête de maîtresse* to give her von bootiful *sciané*, *une épingle magnifique*, and a superb ring. Dese gifts are vort tree hundred pound—too much to give avay. And did I not hear, ven I vas listening at de key-hole, dat *rusée* voman tell *la marquise* dat no grand ladies gave deir rich dresses to deir *femmes de chambres*, but only de dresses ordinaire? 'Ah, ha! milady,' said I to my own self, 'you give de conseil to *madame la marquise*, do you, and vant to make her a bad *maîtresse?* Den I vill see if I cannot turn her against you, and prevent your

getting any more *cadeaux*.' No, no, I moste look after my own interest, and not suffer *la marquise* to be corrupted by dis artful personage."

When Lady Mountserrat retired to her chamber the night that she had lost the wager of fifty pounds, Mademoiselle Justine, while undressing her, ventured to observe that her ladyship looked very ill.

"I tink it is de card-playing dat spoils de complexion of *madame la marquise;* for, before she played, her face vas so fair and de cheeks so pink, for all de vorld like de lilies and de rose."

"I believe there may be some truth in what you say, Justin," replied the marchioness, approaching her face close to the mirror. "Yes; my complexion *is* certainly very much changed for the worse. The truth is, I don't like cards; they bother me, Justin, and when one is put out of temper one's looks are sure to be affected by it."

"But why, *madame la marquise*, will you play to please oder people ven you not like it yourself?"

"Ah, Justin, when ladies are rich and grand they must do many things they don't like, just to keep in with their own equals."

"*Ma foi! madame la marquise*, I tink dat ven ladies are rich and grand, dey ought not to please anybody but demselves. Vat vould be de good of riches and grandeur, if von vas obliged to please oders?"

"Ah! you are thinking of people who are *born* grand, Justin. They, it is true, need think only of pleasing themselves; but you forgot that, though I am now a marchioness, and a rich one into the bargain, I was not born a titled lady, and, therefore, Justin, those who were, are not willing to treat me as an equal; so I must, in order to keep company with them, do what they wish."

"And let dem vin your money, and behave rudely to you ven dey like! Ah! *madame la marquise*, if I vas in your place, I vould act in von very different *manière*. I vould only keep de company of dose dat did vat *I* please, and not dose dat make me do vat *dey* like."

"That's exactly what I'd prefer, Justin, but lords and ladies won't stand it."

"Dat is, *English* lords and ladies von't; *mais, madame la marquise*, if you vould live at Paris—*cher et gai* Paris—you vould find plenty of lords and ladies born vid de grand *titres*, who....."

"What are *titres*, Justin?"

"De *titres* like de English lords and ladies, only moche older."

"But I don't like old people, Justin, even though they may be lords and ladies."

"*Mais, madame*, I not mean old people, I mean old *titres*—dat is, lords and ladies, whose great grand-

faders, ay, and deir great great grandfaders, for many generations, vere born *ducs*, *marquis*, and *comtes*."

"Oh! yes, now I understand, Justin, old nobility."

"*Precisement, madame la marquise, precisement.*"

"Then the French nobility are not like the English—proud and haughty, Justin?"

"In some tings, madame, but not in oders; *par exemple*, dey are very proud of de antiquity of deir families, but dat does not prevent dem from being very polite to dose dat have no grand family at all."

"Well, now, that's what I call sensible, Justin?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* If *madame la marquise* vas to go to Paris, and dere take von *magnifique* hotel, place von very large some of money in de hands of her *banquier*, so large dat *he* talk of it to everybody, and den everybody tell it to de whole vorld at Paris, *madame la marquise* vould soon find plenty of grand acquaintance too happy to come to all her *fêtes* and balls. At Paris, money makes everybody *à la mode*, and den, as madame is a *marquise*, '*sur le marché*....'"

"What is '*sur le marché*,' Justin?"

"It do mean into de bargain, madame."

"Yes, yes, I understand. I wish I knew French, Justin, for now everybody speaks it, and I feel so awkward when people use French words, and I don't know what they say."

"If *madame la marquise* vishes, I vill alvays speak

to her in French, and den she vill soon pick up many vords."

"A very good plan, and mind you don't forget it, Justin. But you were saying, that at Paris I should have all the great nobility glad to come to my parties."

"*Certainement*, madame. Dey vould breakfast, dine, and sup vid you as often as you please, *pourvu*....."

"What is *pourvu?*"

"Dat is provided."

"Yes, yes; I almost guessed it meant something of that kind."

"*Pourvu* dat you had every thing *en grand* style."

"In grand style; you see how quick I am, Justin, in learning French."

"*Oui, madame la marquise.*"

"I didn't mean *we*, Justin, but *me*."

"Ha! ha! ha! Pardon, *madame la marquise*, I cannot help laughing. Ven I say '*oui*,' I mean 'yes,' always yes!"

"Then what a droll language the French must be to say '*we*,' instead of 'yes.'"

"But it is not *we*, as madam suppose, but *o-u-i*."

"*O-u-i* spells *we*, does it?"

"Yes, *madame la marquise*."

"Well, but, Justin, will those French grandees invite me to their houses, in return for my dinners, balls, and *fêtes?*"

"No, madame; de *noblesse Française* give no dinners, except to deir intimate friends, no balls, and deir *soirées* are very select, only de *coteries* in vich dey live go to deir *soirées*. All dose persons know each oder vera vell, and meet at each oder's houses in turn every evening. Dey are quite at deir ease, as if *en petit comité*, and a foreigner among dem vould be *de trop*."

"You don't mean to say that they accept all the hospitalities offered to them by strangers in their own capital, and make no return for them? That is not fair, Justin. Hospitality should be on the principle of give and take; but the French, according to what you tell me, *take*, but do not *give*."

"Dey tink, *madame la marquise*, dat it is quite enough for dem to do de honour to strangers, of accepting deir invitations. Dey go to deir parties elegantly dressed, deir grand names sound vell, and give distinction and fashion to de places to vich dey go; dey smile vera moche—dat is dose dat have de vite teeth to show—make de low reverences to de *maîtresse de la maison*, *critique* all dey see, eat de good tings, talk and laugh vid deir own friends, go avay, and smile at de folly of de English and de Americans,

who spend so much money to do de honours of Paris to de French."

"And well they may, Justin, for nothing can be more foolish!"

"*Que voulez vous, madame la marquise?*"

"What's that?"

"Dat means vat vould you have? De English and de Americans, vid plenty of money, find dat dey cannot amuse themselves in deir own dull countries; so to please demselves, and *not* to please de French, dey come to Paris, and open deir houses, and try to rival de splendour of de ancient *noblesse* in de grand hotels vonce inhabited by dem before a revolution vich has robbed deir descendants of de means of maintaining deir old grandeur. De *noblesse* at Paris smile and shrug up deir shoulders at de clumsy attempt of dese foreigners to imitate deir ancestors; but, neverdeless, all, except *la noblesse du Faubourg St. Germains* go to deir *fêtes*, but take especial good care not to invite dem, in return, to deir *soirées*."

"Then I think the French very shabby for this conduct, Justin; they ought not to accept hospitalities which they will not return."

"Ah! madame, it is so like de habitants of a country *commerçant*, to expect dinner for dinner, ball for ball."

"And why not, pray?"

This question was asked in so angry a tone, and with such a heightened colour in the face of the marchioness, that the cunning *femme de chambre* dared not hazard the impertinent rejoinder that rose to her lips. She, therefore, merely said, "*Madame la marquise* must remember dat de French *noblesse* lost all deir grande fortunes by de terrible revolution ven *pauvre Louis Seize* and Marie Antoinette vere beheaded, and derefore have not de money to return de dinners and *fêtes* given to dem by de English and Americans."

"Oh! that's a different thing, Justin. If they haven't the means, they can't help it; but I know that, if I were in their places, *I* would not accept hospitalities for which I could make no return."

"Ah! *Madame la marquise* has de notions of a *princesse*, and in Paris, madame would be adored. Dere madame vould not be asked to play at cards if she not vish it, and all de French ladies vould be so polite to her—not like dat ugly cross Lady Vellerby, dat looks at *madame la marquise* as if madame vos nobody, and she vos a queen. I cannot bear to see it, it do make me quite vex."

"And how could you see it, even if such a thing had occurred?" demanded the marchioness.

Mademoiselle Justine felt that she had committed herself, but adroitly got out of the scrape by saying,

"Oh! I hear it, madame, from de *courrier* and from de *valet de chambre* of Lord Vellerby. *Dey* are quite shocke to see de rudeness of dat ugly voman to *madame la marquise*."

"She *was* very impudent this evening," said the marchioness, after a pause of some minutes, her cheeks becoming crimson at the recollection, "and I had a great mind to refuse shaking hands with her, that is the truth of the matter."

"And madame would have been quite right, for it is too bad dat Milady Vellerby, who is but a *comtesse*, and has not von half de money dat *madame la marquise* has, should be so impertinent to her superiors."

"But I had the best of the business, I can tell you, Justin, for I gave her as good as she brought, and, what's more, insisted on her drinking a bumper of wine, in spite of her declaring that she never drinks plain wine."

"Ah! *la grande pénitence de boir un verre de bon vin*."

"What is that?"

"*Madame la marquise* is vera good to believe dat it vas a *pénitence* to dat ugly voman to drink a glass of good vine. She too glad to get it, but pretends not to like it before company, just to make de people tink dat she is more genteel dan *madame la marquise*. Many of de *femmes de chambres* of de ladies do tell me

dat deir *maîtresses*, who vill not taste vine before company, drink it ven dere is nobody by, and den pretend to be shocke at dose ladies, like *madame la marquise*, who drink deir vine before all de vorld, vidout making de grimace about it? Vy should not a lady drink vine if she likes it?"

"Ay, why not, indeed? I have no patience with such mock modesty. I have a great mind to go to Paris, Justin, that's what I have, for that is so near London that I could get over turtle and venison, and anything else I fancied, for, to tell you the fact, I am sick to death of the kickshaws they give me to eat here."

Justine, having seen her mistress placed in her bed, retired for the night, leaving that lady to indulge in the disagreeable reflections occasioned by a retrospection of the rudeness of Lady Wellerby, and the money she had lost at cards, increased tenfold by the consequences of repletion, which, acting on her excited system, produced all the horrors of dyspepsia.

"There, I have lost sixty pounds to-night," thought the marchioness. "Sixty pounds! What a fortune I should once have thought half, ay, even a quarter, of that sum! How strange it is that people's minds can change so soon with their circumstances! Thousands appear to me now as shillings used to do, and I seem as accustomed to the possession of great wealth as if I had been used to it all my born days. Ah,

how mistaken people are when they fancy, as I used to do once, that a great fortune can make one perfectly happy! All mine can't procure me such sleep as I used to have, when, after a severe day's work, I had scarcely laid my head on my hard bolster before I was asleep. I used to think, when I had to get up at the break of day, how happy the rich must be who could lie on their downy beds as long as they liked; but now that no one has a softer bed than mine, I can get no rest on it, and, as I lie, turning and twisting until I feel in a fever, I look back to the days of hard labour and nights of refreshing slumber with something like regret.

"Heigho! I dare say that at this moment every soul in the old home is fast asleep, ay, and enjoying pleasant dreams, as I used to have. I wonder, do they ever think of me. How surprised they'd be to see my grandeur! They'd think I must be the happiest woman in the whole world; but they don't know how soon one gets so used to grandeur that it fails to please as at first it did, and that all the money in the world can't buy sleep. *They* don't know what a chilling thing it is to have no one to love one or care about one, except those who have some object to gain, and that, if one's money was gone, all those who flock around the rich would soon go, too. Ah! yes; the poor can count on the affection of their friends. *They*

have no interested motives ; *they* comfort and console each other when sorrow comes, and share each other's joys. How every poor neighbour in dear old Ireland flocks to the house of mourning, to condole with those who have lost one of their family ! How every one brings whatever can be spared — and often what can be but ill spared—to help some poor neighbour in distress ! And what comforting words and what friendly shakes of the hand are given ! Ah ! yes ; if there's more grandeur with the rich, there's more love and kindness among the poor ; and I almost wish I had never left home or become a grand lady, for I am not happy. I wonder whether the stream where I used to rinse out the linen after I had washed it still flows on over the bright sand and shining pebbles with as pleasant a sound as it used to do. Ah ! though I've seen many a fine river since, I have never seen such a beautiful stream as that ! It is strange how often it comes into my head. If I shut my eyes, I can see the trees bending over it, as if it was a looking-glass in which they were admiring themselves, and one large stone near the bank, over which the water gushed so brightly, breaking into large pearls. I had never seen or heard of a pearl then, but now my large pearls always remind me of that spot. How joyfully I used to sing as I beetled my linen on the flat top of that same stone, with the birds singing

over my head, the blue heavens smiling, and the fresh breath of the morning playing with my hair and cooling my forehead, better than any of the fine fans which have cost me so much money could! Often and often, when I can't get a wink of sleep, I think of that stream until I fancy I hear the sound of it, and I at length drop into a slumber."

Whether the memory of the stream in her native land produced the same salutary effect on the marchioness on the present occasion, we are not furnished with any clue to ascertain; but when Mademoiselle Justine answered the summons of her bell at a late hour the next day, she found her mistress pensive and indisposed, and there was a visible irritation in her manner, as she announced that it would be necessary to order dinner for six persons.

"*Comment, madame la marquise!*" exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, with ill-disguised dissatisfaction.

"Common!" reiterated the marchioness. "By no means common. What could put it into your head, Justin, that I would engage common persons to dinner?"

"Madame not understand von vord I say. I not mean common persons, I only say *comment*, which means *how?*"

"I have invited the Wellerbys to dine here, not only to-day, but every day while I remain at Naples. I now wish I had not, for the very thought of having

them bores me; but I don't know how it is, Justin. I very often do things at night that I repent of next morning!"

"Ah! yes, yes," thought Mademoiselle Justine, taking care, however, not to express her thoughts, "I suppose you do. Dat is ven you do drink too much vine, vich happens every evening of your life.—No wonder *madame la marquise* is bored at de very tought; but vat vill it be, ven, day after day, dose disagreeable persons vill be coming to dinner and opening deir eyes vid impertinent looks of vonder at every ting *madame la marquise* eats, and vid horror at every glass of vine madame drinks?"

"And do they do this, Justin? I never noticed it; but then, as I always eat and drink without watching other people, they may have been guilty of this impertinence without my observing it."

"Ah! madame, I swear to you 'tis true. De *courrier* and all de oder servants have seen it, and dey are so mad at such ingratitude for all your kindness dat dey hate de Vellerbys, and say dey only come to vin your money, and save paying for deir dinners at home!"

"I wish I had not asked them, but now it can't be helped."

"Yes, madame, it *can* be helped, for you can leave Naples and go to Paris, and den you vill be rid of dem!"

"Very true, Justin. An excellent plan, and I will certainly carry it into execution, so let all my things be got ready for a start. But go now and tell the *currier* to order a good dinner, the best that can be had. I gave the Wellerbys leave to ask any friends they liked to come, so let the dinner be commanded for six."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* is moche too good, moche too good, and dese people impose on her good nature," said Mademoiselle Justine, turning up her eyes, and leaving the room to fulfil the instructions of her mistress.

The marchioness was seated at a luxurious luncheon, to which she was doing ample honour, while reproaching her *dame de compagnie*, poor Mrs. Bernard, for having so little appetite—a reproach always made whenever they were *tête-à-tête* at any repast, and not uttered in kindness but in contempt, as if a want of appetite was a sin of deep dye in her eyes, when Lady Sophia Wellerby was announced.

"Papa and mamma are gone out for a drive," said that lady, "and I excused myself from accompanying them on the plea of a nervous headache, which I in truth have, and also from a desire to come and enjoy the pleasure of your society, my dear friend, for a little while. How well you are looking to-day!"

"Do sit down and have some luncheon."

"I am half tempted to accept your offer," replied Lady Sophia, her appetite excited by the savory odour of the rich *plats* on the table, which formed a striking contrast to the meagre fare contracted for by her lady-mother, the quality and paucity of which rendered the repast served to the Wellerby family anything but luxurious.

"What are you about, Mrs. Bernard? Why don't you jump up and ring the bell to have a napkin and cover laid for Lady Sophia?"

The new guest sat down, helped herself to what she preferred, and evinced so good an appetite that her hostess, highly pleased to be kept so well in countenance, exclaimed, "Ah! now this is what I call pleasant. It does me good, and sharpens my desire to eat when I have some one with me who enjoys a meal, instead of looking at Mrs. Bernard putting morsels into her mouth as small as if they were for a bird, and sipping a glass of cold water. Drink a glass of prime old sherry, Lady Sophia. 'Twill do you a world of good."

"Well, for once I should like to venture, if I were sure it would not get into my head;" and the lady held her glass to be filled.

"Pour out a bumper," said the marchioness; "and, as to getting into your head, there is not the slightest danger. Look at me; you see wine never gets into *my*

head. Here's to your good health, Lady Sophia; you can't do less than pledge me, so drink your wine up at once, and don't let it get flat in your glass."

The lady did as she was told, with a docility that quite captivated the marchioness—nay, was persuaded, with a little gentle violence, to venture on a second glass of the old sherry, her hostess having emptied no less than four; when both retired to the drawing-room, to enjoy a *tête-à-tête*.

"Ah! my charming friend," said Lady Sophia, taking the hand of Lady Mountserrat; "how truly do I appreciate the happiness of our stolen interviews!"

"And a good luncheon, be assured, takes nothing from their comfort. I can't bear the way in which your mother goes on—refusing to drink wine, and, I suppose, making you follow her example. I dare say, if the truth were known, it would be found that it's out of economy she does it, and, be assured, wine would do you a great deal of good."

"Judging from the new sensations I experience, the unusual warmth of my frame, and the elevation of my spirits, I should be tempted to agree with you in opinion, my sweet friend; but my mother would oppose any change in my *regime*. The truth is, my dear marchioness, mine is not a happy home," and the lady sighed deeply, and shook her head.

"I thought as much," was the reply; "Lady Wellerby seems to me to be a bit of a Tartar, and to want to have everything her own way."

"Alas! you have but too well divined the truth. Could you but know the miserable life I lead, you would indeed pity me."

"Poor soul! and so I do, without knowing any particulars. To be denied the pleasures of the table is enough to make any one miserable. I'm sure *I* couldn't stand it."

"If that were all, my sweet friend, disagreeable as it is, I should bear it without murmuring, for I have been brought up such a stranger to luxuries that I don't miss them; but to have no companionship, to be worse dressed than any other girl in society, and never to have any pocket-money to buy the least thing that strikes my fancy, or to bestow relief on a poor object, —ah! these, my charming friend, are severe trials when one has arrived at my age. I am kept in trammels precisely as if I were a girl just out of the nursery."

"Indeed, yours is a hard case, Lady Sophia. And so you have no pocket-money, poor soul?"

"Not a *sou*," and Lady Sophia looked as piteously as she could.

"Well, you sh'an't be without money, my dear girl, for I'll give you a hundred pounds, that I will."

"Dear Lady Mountserrat, how good, how kind

you are! But, really, I am shocked lest you should think that I revealed my position to you with the slightest intention of appealing to your generosity!"

"And where would be the crime if you did? Indeed, for my part, I never could understand why any one would take the trouble of telling his or her distress to another unless with the view of being relieved."

Lady Sophia's face grew red at this coarse observation; for, mean-spirited and grasping as she was, she felt shocked at the unsophisticated simplicity and truth of the remark made by the vulgar woman to whom she was about to lay herself under an obligation, and, although not ashamed to elicit her generosity by a false statement, her pride revolted at the notion of being found out by one whom she considered so infinitely beneath her in good sense.

"What makes you so red? You are not, I hope, affronted at what I said. I am a plain-spoken person, and like to come to the point at once, without beating about the bush. I asked you no questions, but you told me your situation, and a very disagreeable one it is, I must say. I took the hint, and offered you, with right good will, a hundred pounds. That may seem a great sum to *you*, who have never had any money, but to *me* it is nothing at all, so don't make any ceremony about accepting it. Mind, I *give*, and

don't lend, for I make it a point never to lend money to any one, and I'll tell you the reason:—If I lent, I should expect to be paid, and I've always heard that borrowers, somehow or another, have a great objection to paying; nay, feel more offended when asked to pay than if the loan had been refused them. I'd get angry at finding myself taken in, or put to trouble to get back my money; so, to save all that botheration, I never lend. Therefore, the hundred shall be a free gift to you."

"I don't think it would be right for me to accept so large a present," observed Lady Sophia, assuming an air of modesty and ingenuousness.

"Stuff, nonsense, my dear! What's the difference between money and money's worth, I should like to know? Why, the brooch I gave you the other day cost me one hundred and fifty guineas—the pin and ring as much more—yet you made no great objections about taking them. But you grand folk have such strange notions that you sometimes puzzle me. There now, hand me that box, and write out a cheque for me; I hate drawing cheques myself, and I'll sign it for you."

"Pray, don't; I should have no power of getting the money for it, without its coming to the knowledge of my mother, who would never pardon me."

"Well, now, that's a good joke. *She* was glad

enough to win fifty pounds from me last night—no, fifty *guineas*, I should say—and reminded me no less than twice over of it, for fear I should forget to pay her; yet she would be angry, you say, at your taking a present of a hundred pounds—your mother would say guineas—freely given!"

Lady Sophia felt that it would be useless to attempt to enlighten the obtuse Irishwoman, on the distinctions made in pecuniary matters by persons of her class, so said nothing; and the marchioness, satisfied that she had convinced her companion of the folly of such puerile distinctions, said—"Well, I'll send my *currier* to the bank for the money, and you shall receive it from my own hands, and nobody will be a bit the wiser."

"A thousand thanks, my charming friend. You really overpower me by your kindness. How shall I ever prove to you how deeply I feel it?"

"By just behaving always in the same good-natured manner you do at present, and not acting as I am told most, if not all, fine ladies do—all friendship one day, and all coldness the next."

"If you could read my heart, my dearest friend. you would there see written, in ineffaceable characters, the impression your generosity and friendship have made there."

"Faith and troth! I'm but a poor hand at reading.

even in a plain printed book," said the marchioness, thrown off her guard by the exhilaration produced by four glasses of the prime old sherry, "and as for reading hearts, that's beyond me—but isn't that a carriage I hear stopping at the door?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Lady Sophia. "It is my mother's carriage, and I must fly. Adieu, my sweet friend, adieu!"

"Mind you come to luncheon to-morrow, and I'll have the money ready for you," replied Lady Mountserrat, as Lady Sophia hurried from the room, and by a back staircase gained her chamber before her mother could reach her own *salon*.

"Well, I've sent her away a happy girl," thought the marchioness, when left alone. "Poor thing! to think of her never having had any money to call her own. How well I remember my joy and happiness the first money I got, and how I lay awake all night thinking what I'd buy with it! How little poor people know about lords and ladies! They think—and so used I to think, too—that they have always their purses filled with gold; and that hundreds—ay, by my faith, and thousands, too—are no more to them than halfpence, or even farthings, are to the hard-working poor. But how different is this from the fact! Here's an earl and a countess, with only one daughter to provide for, and they leave the poor

girl without so much as a guinea in her pocket; and as for her dress, why she wears only poor, thin, mean silks, that never, I am sure, cost more than two shillings a yard, and has not many even of these same. How affronted Justin would be if any one offered her such dresses! I'd pity poor lords and ladies, if they were not so proud."

CHAPTER LIV.

Fortune, thou fickle goddess! men by thee
Are taught the uses of adversity;
Thou art of worldly friendships the true test,
For as thy smiles with virtues can invest
Those who possess them not, so can thy frown,
Of good men's deeds the recollection drown.
And when thou fliest, fame and false friends too,
Will quickly leave him whom thou didst undo
To learn the lesson, often taught too late,
That only on thy minions do they wait.

In the midst of his own pecuniary annoyances—and such annoyances are, perhaps, among the most humiliating and painful of any to a proud mind—Strathern felt glad that his friend, Lord Delmington, would no longer have occasion for his aid, and reflected with satisfaction that he had been able to assist him when his services were most required.

There are few circumstances in life on which a generous man reflects with so much complacency as

on acts of friendship conferred on the deserving. This soothes him even when fortune denies him the power of continuing such acts of kindness; and he knows that, though the fickle crowd who bask in the sunshine of fortune may forsake him, the friends he succoured will fondly cling to him still. On Lord Delmington and Olliphant, he felt he could count; they were not like the herd he had lately encountered, and doubtless many more such hearts might be found had he been wiser in the selection of his friends.

The experience for which men pay dearly is always more valued than that offered to them gratis by others. There is no sense of humiliation in listening to the dictates of wisdom purchased at the cost of some suffering—nay, a man's self-love is in some degree gratified by the consciousness that he is capable of discovering his own errors, even though, as in general it unhappily occurs, the discovery comes somewhat too late. Causes are too frequently not looked into until their effects are felt; but the truth of the homely proverb, "a burned child dreads the fire," is exemplified every day in the self-correction produced by the grave results of former follies.

As Strathern looked seriously into his own past conduct, and analyzed it with as much impartiality as he would have done that of a stranger, how much did he see to condemn in time misspent, duties neglected,

and an unchecked indulgence in his own pleasures! Luckily for him, the natural refinement of his mind had kept him free from the coarse vices which stain so many of his contemporaries, and the innate goodness of his heart had prevented his wilfully giving pain to others. But reflection whispered that, although he had done little harm, he had also done little good, and that, blessed with means to effect an amelioration in the fate of hundreds whom it was his positive duty to assist, he had wasted an immense portion of his large fortune in recklessly consulting only his own taste, careless of the price required to carry his wishes into effect. His thoughtlessness in yielding an assent to the demands of Lord Francis Musgrove and various other of his unprincipled associates, now that the consequence of his folly was fully exposed to him, was viewed in a very different light to that in which he had previously regarded it. Every reflection on the past was fraught with humility at his own want of good sense and discretion; and strong and unchangeable was the resolution he formed, that henceforth the fortune confided to him should be appropriated to better purposes than the mere gratification of his own selfish pleasures, or to the support of those of his spendthrift acquaintances. He would devote his time to bettering the condition of the labouring classes, to extending the blessings of education, and to relieving the wants of

the distressed. No longer supinely abandoning himself to the disappointment of the heart to which he had hitherto yielded without resistance, he would seek, in the discharge of his duties, an oblivion of care, and merit, even though he might not be so fortunate as to attain it, the approbation of her whose image still reigned triumphant in his heart. "If I cannot be happy myself," thought Strathern, "let me at least endeavour to render others so;" and this generous determination sent a glow of satisfaction through his heart, that he accepted as a foretaste of the consolation that awaited him when, released from the pecuniary annoyances that at present pressed upon him, he should be free to devote himself to carrying out the munificent projects that he had formed, and should witness their gratifying results.

Strathern lost no time in lodging the sum repaid him by Mr. Vincent in the hands of his banker, and having drawn cheques to settle the small accounts of the different tradespeople, whose pressing demands for payment, ever since the report of his embarrassments had been made public, had only been equalled by their desire to have his name entered on their books previously, he felt more at ease than he had lately done.

The next day's post brought him no less than six or seven letters from college friends, who, having

heard of his pecuniary difficulties, wrote to offer their aid, either by the advance of loans or by giving security for him. The warmth and kindness with which these offers were made, and by men, too, with whom he had held little or no intercourse since he left college, were very gratifying to his feelings, and soothed him under the annoying proofs they afforded of the publicity of his reported ruin. The characters, likewise, of those who thus unsolicited proffered their services, rendered his sense of them still more satisfactory; for, distinguished in both houses of parliament, no less for the talent they displayed there than for the pure patriotism which formed the basis and guide of their actions, they were looked on as among the most prominent of those on whom the eyes of the nation were fixed with hope for the achievement of much future good to be effected by their unwearied exertions, as well as with much gratitude for past ones.

"*They*," thought Strathern, as he mused over the contents of their letters, "have been passing their time more profitably for their country, and more honourably for themselves, than I have done. I feel that I do not merit the interest that these my former friends still take in my welfare, so promptly shown by the generosity with which they act towards me. But it is not yet too late to redeem lost time; and, fired

by their example, I will join the patriot band, and defend the interests they have so nobly espoused."

Strathern wrote to these friends warmly and gratefully, as he felt; explained to them that his difficulties were but of a temporary nature; and expressed his desire, when he had finally arranged them, of entering parliament, and of making one of a party with whose political opinions his own so entirely coincided. A new and useful career seemed to open to him a road to distinction, in which any talent he might possess would not only be used with credit to himself, but with advantage to his country, and he mentally pledged himself that henceforth his should be no idle life, and that he would render himself worthy of being named with those whose noble and disinterested conduct he longed to emulate.

Cheered by hopes for the future, Strathern cast from him the despondency that had lately clung to him; and although the fair Louisa Sydney was not less fondly beloved than before, she was remembered with less painful emotions, because he was determined to render himself more worthy of her esteem. His good resolutions were strengthened, and his spirits cheered, when, a few days after, some of the friends who had written to offer their aid in the belief that he required it, arrived in town, and sought him out. He listened with a glowing heart to their generous sympathy for

the wants of the people, and their philanthropical plans for bettering their condition. It was a pleasant sight to behold these fine young men, some of whom were the scions of the noblest and proudest families of England, forgetful of self-interest, and resisting the temptations of pleasure that courted them on every side, in order to devote themselves to the good work in which they were so earnestly engaged.

How empty, how puerile, appeared now to Strathern the objects that had hitherto occupied his attention! While he had been intent on expending thousands in the purchase of statues at Rome, his college friends had been devoting all their time and thoughts to a nobler purpose, that of rendering men enlightened and worthy of the advantages they were determined to obtain for them by advocating their interests and defending their rights. With what pleasure did Strathern turn to such men, after having experienced the heartlessness of the idle voluptuaries whose society he had found so irksome, even before he had discovered their utter worthlessness! The friends with whom he now found himself associated had made a vast progress in useful knowledge and general information since he had parted from them, brief as that period had been. They had been incited to seek instruction by the desire of better fulfilling the grave and noble task they had undertaken, and had applied

themselves so diligently to their self-imposed studies that Strathern felt that he, too, must be active, in order to overtake them and be able to fulfil his part in the good work in which they were engaged. How different were these men to the Mountserrats, Musgroves, and Crawleys of the day, and how did he glory in their friendship!

There is no better plan for securing a relief from one's own personal cares than in taking an interest in those of others. The instances of privation and misery brought before Strathern by the noble-minded friends with whom he now spent the greater portion of his time, made so deep an impression on his heart, that it ceased to be wholly engrossed as hitherto by the passion that enervated it; and his own difficulties appeared puerile, when compared with those of men whose daily toil could hardly furnish a scanty meal to their poor families. How little had he hitherto reflected on the hard fate of such men, how little had he done to ameliorate their condition, or to relieve their wants? How many men like Strathern, with fine natures and kind dispositions, requiring only the stimulus of example and association with kindred minds, remain long inert, and blind, as it were, to the misery around them, and the duties which their positions entail, until, touched by the chastening spirit of philanthropy exhibited by others, their

breasts own a generous sympathy, and they join in the good work!

Never did miser regret a lost treasure more than did Strathern the vast sums he had hitherto lavished, when he beheld the good he might have effected with even one quarter of the wealth so recklessly expended. "Ah! were I again rich," thought he, "how differently would I act! But, though I have so materially impaired my fortune, ample means still remain for doing good, and my own selfish pleasures, and not the claims of the poor, shall be curtailed in consequence of my former follies."

Walking in St. James's Street a few days after these reflections, Strathern was accosted by his old acquaintance, Mr. Crawley. He had seen this gentleman approach, but, aware of his worldliness, as well as of his unceremoniousness in evincing it, he was passing without bowing to him, when, with an unblushing effrontery, Crawley extended his hand, seized that of Strathern, and pressing it warmly, addressed him in the most cordial terms.

"Why, my dear fellow, have you avoided us all of late, and why have you not been to our club?" demanded he, while Strathern, astonished at this unexpected civility, was wholly at a loss how to account for it. "You are wrong," resumed Crawley, "to keep aloof in this manner from your old friends—

you are, indeed, my dear fellow! There is nothing like sticking by old friends—'pon my soul, there is not!"

"But are old friends always disposed to adhere to this rule? I fancy not, Crawley; indeed, I know that some are not, and, to be candid with you, I thought ——'s Club the very last place where a man who was arrested in front of its windows, a short time ago, was likely to meet with a cordial reception, and, judging by the conduct of some of its members, from whom I fancied I had a right to expect better treatment, I formed rather an unfavourable opinion of the whole."

"You had some reason, I must confess, but I hope we are not *all* so callous as those to whom you allude. Be assured, my dear Strathern, you have some friends, and I may truly add I am among the number, whom no change of fortune could alienate from you."

Strathern was really touched by this unexpected kindness of manner in a man so universally considered the most selfish among his *clique*, and he returned the pressure of his hand with more warmth than he had ever previously done in his life, when, having reached ——'s Club, and declined the pressing request of his companion to enter it, he bade him farewell.

As he turned from Mr. Crawley, he was accosted by Mr. Rhymer, who, after the first salutation, remarked, in his usual cynical tone, "Had I not heard

of your good fortune, I should have surmised that some very favourable turn of the wheel of the blind goddess had enriched you, merely from seeing the demonstrations of friendship towards you evinced by Mr. Crawley, who never yet was known to bestow even a shake of the hand on one on whom the fickle deity frowned."

"I am perfectly ignorant of any peculiar good fortune," replied Strathern. "Pray enlighten me?"

"Is it possible that you, whom it the most nearly concerns, have not heard the news which reached London two hours ago through Sir Edward Topham, who was almost a witness to the catastrophe?"

"I really have heard no news, and have seen no one to-day, except Crawley and yourself, so I cannot possibly guess to what catastrophe you refer."

"The deaths of Lord Argentyn and his three sons, all of whom were drowned by the upsetting of his boat in the heavy gale of wind last evening, as they were leaving his yacht at the back of the Isle of Wight to go on shore."

"Good heavens! how shocking!" exclaimed Strathern, forgetting, in the pity excited by the sad fate of Lord Argentyn and his sons, how greatly he should be a gainer by the event.

Mr. Rhymer looked at him with more complacency than his saturnine countenance was wont to assume.

"You are a singular person," said he, "and receive the news of your accession to forty thousand a-year with more philosophy than I imagined any man, and least of all a ruined man, as you have been represented to be, could exhibit in similar circumstances."

"Did you expect me to rejoice at the deaths of four individuals in whose existence the happiness of many may be bound up?" asked Strathern, angrily.

"I only expected you to feel as nine-tenths of my acquaintances would on a like occasion; for few, very few are those who could for a moment reflect on the means that produced so desirable an end as the coming into forty thousand a-year, and all the *agrémens* attached to it. Already have you experienced one of the advantages of this event; Mr. Crawley, the worldly-wise Mr. Crawley, who was never known to smile on one on whom fortune frowned, has sought you, has pressed your hand, and put on his most friendly countenance to greet you. I anticipated this when I saw him two hours ago, listening to the account of the catastrophe at the Isle of Wight, and heard him inquiring how many thousands a-year the inheritance would bring you. I must also do the rest of your *ci-devant* friends the justice to say that they seem disposed to treat you henceforth with equal kindness. Even the Marquis of Mountserrat declared

you were not, after all, so bad a fellow as some asserted. Lord Francis Musgrove said he would call on you to-day, and I add that he will probably do you the honour of borrowing a thousand or two from you; in short, at this moment, I know of no man who stands in higher estimation at ——'s Club than you do, and for this change in the feelings of its members you may thank the gale of last evening, which verifies the truth of the old adage that 'it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.'"

Although Strathern was only very slightly acquainted with the late Lord Argentyn, the news of his death and that of his three sons produced so great a shock in his mind that he felt unfit for society that day, and returned to his hotel, where he gave strict orders to be denied to all visitors. He felt a blush of indignation mount to his cheek, when, two hours after, the waiter at the Clarendon presented him with about fifty cards which had been left during his absence. Among them were those of the Marquis of Mountserrat and Lord Francis Musgrove, with a note from the latter, containing a most pressing invitation to dinner.

Never was Strathern more deeply impressed with a conviction of the heartlessness and falseness of what is termed fashionable society than at that moment, and the contempt it excited in his mind almost

banished from it the recollection of the cause which had again drawn around him those summer friends, who had fled when they thought he might require their assistance, but who now returned when fortune again showered her favours on him. The bandage which had concealed from him the selfishness and duplicity of his former associates had dropped from his eyes, never more to be resumed, and he felt a wiser—ay, and a better man; for his experience of their heartlessness did not dispose him to misanthropy; it only rendered him aware of his own error in having lived with such men, when, as he felt persuaded, so many good and estimable ones were to be found elsewhere.

"Henceforth," said Strathern, "I will forsake the flowery path where thorns lie hid while the summer lasts, but where, no sooner do the flowers begin to perish at the first rude blast of winter, than the thorns take their place, to wound those who would seek to cull one stray flower from among them."

Then his thoughts reverted to her from whom they were seldom absent—to Louisa Sydney. Were she to share his good fortune, and to help him to dispense it nobly and wisely for the good of others, so as to call down a blessing on them both, how different would be his fate! But what availed it to think of her. She never more would be aught to him. Had

she not rejected him when he was believed to be rich, broken her solemn engagement to share his destiny, and when forgetful of the ill treatment he had experienced at her hands, had she not, when reduced to poverty, scornfully refused the hand once more offered for her acceptance? No, it was folly, madness, to think of her, and yet of this folly he was every hour guilty. He almost despised himself for it, and determined, as he had done a hundred times before, to banish her from his thoughts ; but when an object has once taken possession of the heart, it is in vain to try to drive it from its resting-place: there it will reign, in spite of every effort to chase it, proving that love, like other dangerous maladies, can resist the volition of him whom it makes its victim.

Strathern's reflections were interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Papworth, who would take no denial from the porter, who had orders to admit no one. "I forced admittance, sir," said he, "and I hope the occasion will excuse the liberty. You have not, I conclude, heard the news," a conclusion which the grave, if not sad countenance of Strathern led him to form.

"If you refer to the melancholy deaths of Lord Argentyn and his sons, I am aware of that sad event."

"Yes, sir, I *did* refer to it. I only heard the news

half an hour ago, and I instantly hurried off to apprise you of it."

Strathern acknowledged the attention only by a bow; and the gravity of his aspect, so different to what he had expected, checked the congratulations that rose to the lips of Mr. Papworth on his accession to fortune.

"You were not related to the late Lord Argentyn, I believe, sir," observed the man of law.

"No," replied Strathern, "and I had only a very slight acquaintance with him."

Emboldened by this avowal, Mr. Papworth took courage to add, "You are now, sir, the possessor of one of the best paid rent-rolls in England: a clear forty-five thousand a year, with two of the noblest seats I know. The mansion of the former earl, in which you passed so many of your boyish days, with all its valuable collection of pictures and statues, and unique library, are now yours."

He paused, expecting to see a change in the countenance of his client at the recapitulation of his good fortune, but he was disappointed, for Strathern continued to look as grave as before.

"It is a pity, sir," resumed he, "that you ever embarked in building, seeing that you have now inherited so fine a mansion in town. Had my advice been asked, that step would not have been taken."

This remark aroused Strathern's spleen, and, turning with more animation than he had hitherto displayed, he said, while something like a smile played around his lips, "I was not aware that your prescience, great as I am willing to believe it, went so far as to anticipate that I should inherit the mansion of Lord Argentyn, and consequently not require to erect one."

"No, sir; I did *not* look forward to such an event as within the bounds of probability, for, with three sons, all healthy, fine youths, I thought the succession was secured in the Argentyn family; but what I meant to imply was, that, had I been consulted, I should have had a regular contract made with the builder, and so saved you a vast sum."

"You will, of course, now stop all proceedings in effecting the loan we had contemplated, and also not think of selling out of the funds."

"Certainly, sir—certainly. There was something curious about that loan that I have not been able to make out. It was literally offered to me for you, and to an unlimited amount, by a solicitor of my acquaintance. Nay, so desirous was he to accommodate you, that he said any portion of it could be advanced, if necessary, previously to the deeds being drawn up—an offer, I believe I may say, unprecedented, and the more remarkable on the part of so cautious and steady a lawyer as Mr. Wandsworth."

"Mr. Wandsworth!" exclaimed Strathern; "why did you not tell me before that the loan was offered by him?"

"Because he told me that he particularly wished that his name should not be mentioned in the business; that he had a great objection to its appearing in the transaction; and I respected his whim, for so I considered it, and would not have named him, had it not slipped out thoughtlessly just now."

The truth instantly flashed on the mind of Strathern, and warm was the glow of feeling it produced in his heart. He guessed that in the proffered loan Mr. Wandsworth was but the agent of Mrs. Sydney or her daughter. None but friends truly interested in his welfare would have offered to advance an unlimited sum of money even before the legal papers could be drawn up or signed. Yes, it was plain that this generous and delicate mode of serving him could only proceed from a woman. He was therefore still thought of, still esteemed, by the only two of the sex whom he loved, and their first use of the wealth they had both so lately inherited was to succour him from the effects of his own imprudence! A thousand fond thoughts and hopes sprang up in his breast at this proof of their continued interest in him; and Mr. Papworth, as he marked the change in his countenance from sadness to animation, very justly con-

cluded that money had no part in the feeling that had produced it. "He is a strange mortal," thought that sapient gentleman, "and never will, I fear, learn the value of money. He hears unmoved that he is the possessor of immense wealth, and this, too, when through his own folly he was in positive want of money; yet he brightens up the moment that he learns that Mr. Wandsworth was the person who offered the loan. There must be something more than meets the eye in all this, and when I see Wandsworth I must try if I cannot discover it."

"You are aware of the sudden death of the Marquis of Roehampton!" observed Strathern.

"Yes, sir. One of the partners of the late marquis's solicitors, who are friends of mine, set off for Italy, the moment he learned the event, in order to convey the tidings to the present marquis, whose delicate state of health induced them to prefer this mode of breaking the sad news to him to conveying it by letter. Mr. Warton was to travel night and day until he reached the marquis."

A letter at that moment was handed to Strathern, and his cheek glowed as he perused it. It came from Mr. Vincent, and stated, with many humble apologies for the liberty he was taking, that, having by accident learned that Mr. Strathern was under some temporary difficulties at the moment, he begged to inform him

that he was ready to advance fifty or a hundred thousand pounds without a day's delay, and that, if that sum was not sufficient, another fifty thousand would be forthcoming.

"You see, Mr. Papworth," said Strathern, handing him the letter, "I have some true friends."

"Vincent," observed Mr. Papworth—"ay, a very rich man. I did not know that you were acquainted with him. A very liberal offer. But perhaps he heard the change in your fortune. It is by this time generally known."

"He could not have heard it at Bath, whence you will see, by the postmark, he wrote; and the letter was written yesterday, some hours before the occurrence of the fatal event that has enriched me," replied Strathern, reproachfully.

"Yes, yes, so I now see," observed Mr. Papworth, examining the date and postmark of the letter. "Really, Mr. Vincent's offer is a very handsome one."

Mr. Papworth rose to take his leave, saying that he should hold himself in readiness to start for either of Lord Argentyn's seats at the shortest notice, and send two of his clerks to see to the inventories.

"There must be no hurry in this affair," said Stra-

thern. "Let nothing be done until after due time has elapsed for the finding of the bodies, and rendering the last sad offices to the dead. The late lord was, I believe, a widower. I think I remember reading the death of Lady Argentyn in the newspapers a year ago. Has she left any daughters?"

"No, sir; the only issue were the three youths who perished with their father."

When he found himself alone, again and again did Strathern advert to the loan offered by Mr. Wandsworth, and each time with increased satisfaction. The hopes it awakened changed the sadness which the deaths of Lord Agentyn and his sons had awakened in his mind; and, although such an acknowledgment may stamp him as unwise and unworldly, it may with truth be asserted that the vast fortune he had so unexpectedly inherited afforded him much less pleasure than the proof of the continued remembrance of him by Mrs. and Miss Sydney conveyed by Mr. Wandsworth's offer. He reflected with gratitude on the opportunity afforded him by his temporary pecuniary embarrassment of judging of that world of which he had previously formed so erroneous an opinion.

Strathern had been a proud, and not a vain man; and, conscious of his own high-minded and generous feelings, he had believed himself worthy of inspiring

friendship and esteem. Adversity, brief as had been its visit, had taught him that the very qualities in the possession of which he had prided himself had only served to render him the dupe of the artful and designing among the heartless associates with whom he mixed, proving to him that even the noblest qualities are unvalued, if not prejudicial to their owner, when only brought in contact with those incapable of appreciating them. He had himself alone to blame for not having more wisely chosen his companions, and for having, without the least exercise of his judgment in their selection, fallen into the routine of fashionable life with its futile members, instead of having sought the acquaintance of the wise and good.

Henceforth, how differently would he act! Yes; he would yet redeem the time he had lost, the follies he had committed. He would cultivate the acquaintance of those only whose example would be profitable, and whose esteem would be honourable. He would prove that he merited respect, not for his wealth, but for his good qualities; and a day might come when Louisa Sydney would once more deign to restore him to the place he once held in her heart. There was comfort, there was happiness in this hope, vague and distant as its realization might be, and Strathern laid it to his heart. But, though cheerful, he was not elated. The vicissitudes of fortune he had expe-

rienced, although slight when compared with those of other men, had sobered his mind ; and the sad event which had enriched him awakened reflections on the uncertainty of life that precluded him from feeling the joy generally felt by young heirs on gaining a splendid inheritance.

Ere three days had elapsed since the announcement of the large fortune which had fallen to him, the creditors, and Mr. Drinkwater was among the first, sent in the most civil letters, stating their willingness to wait Mr. Strathern's own convenience for the settlement of their accounts. The very men who had but a few days before urged the strongest plea of dire necessity as an excuse for pressing the immediate payment of their bills — nay, who had taken legal proceedings to enforce it—were now in no sort of haste to receive the amount, and only "solicited the honour of a continuance of his favours." The fashionable world, too—that world composed, for the most part, of the heartless scions of nobility, too proud to work, but not ashamed to borrow or beg ; and of fortune-hunting mothers and their calculating daughters, longing to exchange the dull paternal roof and stinted pocket-money, for a fine mansion and liberal pin-money, to be supplied by a rich husband, again extended to him their advances ; but he had now discovered the hollowness of their friendships, and had

determined henceforth to seek only among that portion of the true nobility and gentry who eschew fashion and folly as synonymous, and who reflect honour on their country, associates to be in time ripened into friends.

CHAPTER LV.

Hail, wedded love! the purest bliss on earth,
The sweet'ner of man's life, in mercy given
To soothe his cares, to cheer his home and hearth,
And grant him here a foretaste of that heaven
He humbly hopes in after life to reach,
How many virtues canst thou only teach!
What melting charities are in thy bond,
That sacred tie that death alone can rend;
The tender, faithful wife, the mother fond,
The truest and the most devoted friend,
The gentlest nurse to soothe the couch of pain,
When medicine has tried its art in vain.

The balmy air of Naples, and the tender care of the most devoted and watchful nurse that man was ever blessed with, did much towards the slow but gradual recovery of Lord Delmington. He still, however, remained too great an invalid to be allowed to take any part in the conduct of his own affairs; and as his youthful wife was little skilled in such matters, and their physician devoted all his leisure hours to the

study of botany and chemistry, the financial department was imprudently confided to the management of their *courrier*. This man, taking advantage of the inexperience and misplaced confidence of his employers, not only embezzled large sums by presenting false accounts and receipts, but also forged the signature of Lord Delmington to bills drawn on Strathern to a large amount, and decamped, leaving his master with only a very few *louis* in his purse, and deeply in debt.

It was lucky that the worthy doctor, more provident and guarded than his patient, had some funds safe in his own keeping, which he immediately placed at his disposal. The banker too, a worthy man, no sooner heard of the flight and forgery of the *courrier*, than he came forward to request that Lord Delmington would continue to draw through his house as previously, so that the fond and amiable couple suffered but little inconvenience from an event which, under other circumstances, might have placed them for the time in a very painful and embarrassing position. They were little aware of the change in Strathern's finances, or of the difficulties in which his generosity to them had plunged him, and, consequently, Lord Delmington drew on him with perfect confidence, not only in his inclination, but also in his power to honour the bills he drew.

The time was now approaching when Lady Delmington was to become a mother, and the joyful anticipation of this longed-for event seemed to bestow fresh strength on the delicate frame of her husband, a change which was hailed with pious gratitude to the Giver of all good by this excellent young creature, who looked forward with dread to the chance of his health suffering, during her confinement, from the want of her incessant care. Seldom, perhaps, had so much happiness been accorded to those who had made a stolen marriage, as to this pair. The only alloy to their felicity consisted in their regret for the sole act of disobedience of which Lord Delmington had ever been guilty; and yet, deeply as they deplored its consequences in having excited such displeasure and implacable anger on the part of the Marquis of Roehampton, neither of them could wish the fond and holy tie that bound their destinies undone—they only grieved that such happiness as they enjoyed should have been purchased at the heavy price of a father's wrath, and prayed that he might yet be induced to pardon and receive them beneath the parental roof.

Often did Lady Delmington wish that the rank of her husband had been less elevated; for, though formed to adorn the most exalted station, she was so simple in her tastes, so unambitious in her nature,

and so wholly and passionately attached to her lord, that she would have preferred a modest competency with him, free from the humiliating and unjust suspicions entertained by his father of her having wedded him, not from affection, but from interested motives, to the most brilliant position and the possession of unbounded wealth. Every day served to bring forth some new and admirable quality in this charming young woman. Her sweetness of temper, gentleness of manner, and the intuitive quickness with which she anticipated the wants and wishes of her husband, increased his attachment to her every hour; and as he beheld her gliding with noiseless step to minister to his comfort, cheering him by her sweet smiles, reading to him aloud, and proving, by her comments on the books she perused, how just, refined, and pure was her taste, he blessed the hour that gave such a treasure to his home, even while lamenting that this blessing had deprived him of his father's countenance, for affection he could not say he had ever experienced from his parent.

"Could he but behold her," would he often say to himself, "discharging the duties of a wife, or rather as a ministering angel watching over his only child, and wooing back health to this feeble frame, by her tenderness and incessant care, surely even his sternness would relent, and he would bestow the only thing

requisite to render our happiness perfect—his approval and benediction."

At other times, Lord Delmington would indulge in day-dreams peculiar to the young and delicate. He would fancy himself in the home of his childhood, restored to a father's love, his sweet and gentle Mary cherished and fondly appreciated by his parent, and their child caressed in his grandfather's arms.

"Yes, so it will, it *must* be one day," would Lord Delmington exclaim, when alone, and this hope soothed his affectionate heart when pained by the recollection of Lord Roehampton's wrath, which too frequently recurred to interrupt a happiness that would without this one alloy have been perfect.

At length, the blessing of being a father was accorded to him; and as he pressed his infant son in his arms, and thanked the Almighty for this new treasure, he breathed a prayer for forgiveness, for having by his disobedience inflicted pain on his own parent, and vowed henceforth to atone for this one sin by every means in his power.

There are few scenes in life more touching than that in which a youthful and doting pair contemplate for the first time the little being whose birth seems a new tie to bind them still more indissolubly to each other; the recent danger of the young mother, before which her husband's heart has quailed while feeling on how frail a thread has depended her life and his entire

happiness; the deep gratitude that she has been spared to him, and their mutual tenderness for the dear infant, which appears to their partial eyes to be a prodigy of beauty, renders the chamber of the young mother a sacred and holy place, whence thanksgivings fresh and pure from the heart ascend to Heaven. When Lord Delmington pressed his lips to the velvet cheek of his little son, almost fearful as he did so that his caresses might injure the delicate creature, and resigned it to the arms of its beautiful mother, what a glance of ineffable tenderness was exchanged between the young parents as their faces bent together over that of their child, invoking a blessing on its head!

Perfect tranquillity being enjoined by the doctor, Lord Delmington, with all a lover's fondness and almost a woman's care, took his station by the couch of his wife. There would he remain for whole hours, watching her while she ministered its food to their infant with all a mother's pride and delight, or while she slumbered with the babe by her side, their gentle breathing mingling together, and she smiling in her happy dreams. Often would she half open her languid eyes, and put forth her small white hand to feel that her happiness was not all a dream, that she was indeed a mother, and that her infant was safe, then turn those melting eyes with a look of unutterable tenderness on her husband, and close them again in

slumber, her beautiful mouth wearing a smile of such heartfelt contentment as brought tears of gratitude to the eyes of him who watched over her with such brooding love.

And when the ninth day was over, that day named by doctors and nurses as the epoch on which danger for young mothers may be said to be over, and consequently that a little more freedom from the restrictions enjoined by that despot of the sick room, the doctor, may be enjoyed, how did the fond pair pour forth their feelings, the expression of which had been suppressed for so many days, as they in turn embraced their child, each pronouncing its little features to bear a striking resemblance to the other, and professing to love it more fondly on that account! "Only look, dearest," would Lady Delmington say, as she gazed with maternal joy and pride on her son; "how like his dear beautiful eyes are to yours! See how bravely he meets the light without lowering his lids!"

"His eyes, my blessed Mary, are much more like yours, and he has got your little mouth exactly."

"How can you say so, Henry? Only ask nurse, and she will confirm my assertion that baby is the image of you."

"So every nurse is bound to say, especially when mammas, like my own Mary, are given to flattering their husbands."

"See, how I can make the darling smile by tickling his dear little chin," would the doting mother say, applying her slender and rose-tipped finger to the dimpled chin of the child. "Isn't he a perfect love, dearest? and look at his beautiful little hands. Were there ever such lovely little hands seen before?"

"So, I dare say, every mother has thought when looking at her first born," would Lord Delmington say, trying to look grave.

"Now, really, Henry, you affront me; you seem so sensible and wise about *our* child, just as if he were no more beautiful than any other infant."

And then the delighted husband would clasp the mother and child to his breast, and confess that he had never previously believed an infant *could* be so beautiful, and his happy wife would repay the confession with a glance full of tenderness.

"Let us name him after your father, dearest," said Lady Delmington. "Perhaps this dear little fellow may yet make our peace with his grandfather. Ah! I should then have no wish on earth ungratified, except to see you restored to health."

"But I am so much better, Mary. Your nursing has made me so. What should I have done without you?" and he stooped to kiss her fair and polished brow.

Every day marked the progress of returning health

to the fond pair, and increasing vigour to their child, and as its eyes wandered over the objects around, its parents believed that even already it was endowed with a power of observation reserved for children several months older, and hailed with delight its growing intelligence. Lady Delmington had left her chamber, and taken the air several times, accompanied by her lord, when the sad intelligence of the death of the Marquis of Roehampton reached them. The blow was severely felt by both, but the perfect sympathy existing between them served as a consolation under this heavy trial.

Unlike the generality of young heirs, Lord Delmington had never desired the possession of the vast estates entailed on him, and, stern and unrelenting as his father had proved, the wish nearest his heart since the day he had led his Mary to the altar was, that he might be allowed to present her to his sire; that lengthened days might be accorded to the marquis, to witness the felicity of his son, to appreciate her who conferred it, and to bless his grandchild and children to come. Now this fond hope was vanished. His father had died without seeing him, without having assured him of his forgiveness, and bitter were the tears he shed at this reflection. Sorrow shared is lightened. No common-place words of condolence escaped the lips of the tender wife as she witnessed

the grief of her husband; but the tears that mingled with his, the gentleness that forbore to urge one vain word of consolation, did more to soothe the bitterness of his regret than all the eloquence of oratory or the reasoning of philosophy could have achieved. It was no joy to them to find themselves, from a state of dependance on the liberality of a friend, suddenly elevated to high rank and immense possessions. For many days they were insensible to this fact, and remembered only that they had lost a father whose affection they had counted on winning by future obedience and devotion to his wishes, and whose declining days they had hoped to render happy by their affectionate care. The atoning grave had closed over *him*, to have conciliated whom they would have submitted to any humiliation, and all his coldness and sternness were forgotten in the regret his death occasioned them.

"Ah! had he but lived to see our child," would the Marquis of Rochampton, as we must now call him, say, "I could have better borne this blow; but to die without knowing you, my own Mary, and, consequently, without being able to judge how impossible it was to see and not love you, to know and not esteem you—ah! this is, indeed, a terrible aggravation to my grief."

"We will love and revere his memory, dearest,"

would the marchioness reply, "and teach our boy to honour it, too. We will ever act as if *he* were still alive to approve or condemn our conduct; and, though he knew me not on earth, let us hope we may hereafter meet where no partings are, and where the secrets of all hearts being revealed, our father will know that, though far inferior in station to his son, no unworthy motive led me to become his wife, and that, if never-dying love and boundless gratitude could repay the sacrifice my Henry made in wedding one so lowly as his Mary, the debt was not forgotten."

Many days had elapsed before the Marquis and Marchioness of Roehampton had conquered their grief sufficiently to undertake their voyage home; and, in the interim, the news of their accession to rank and fortune was made known by the newspapers at Naples to all the English persons of distinction there, and excited, as is usual on similar occasions, much conversation. Lord and Lady Wellerby had been to call on the British minister's wife, where some other visitors were discussing how many thousands, or tens of thousands a-year, the rent-roll of the present marquis amounted to.

"The marchioness is a very beautiful woman," observed one of the party.

"Yes, so I hear," replied Lady Wellerby, "and

owes her good fortune solely to being so, for she is said to be low-born, stupid, and vulgar, which induced me to decline making her acquaintance."

"Your ladyship is not always so very scrupulous," remarked a lady present, "for I believe you receive the Marchioness of Mountserrat, who, if report be true, is one of the most vulgar women in the world."

"I should not cite her as a well-bred woman, certainly," replied Lady Wellerby, drawing herself up, and looking angry in spite of her attempts to conceal her displeasure; "but she is by no means so vulgar as you seem to think, and her reputation is irreproachable."

"Yes, that I'll be sworn it is," said the British minister, "for she is much too ugly either to endanger her own virtue, or to tempt that of others."

"I am sure that I am the last person in the world to judge harshly, or to propagate scandal," observed Lady Wellerby, an assertion that produced a general smile on the faces of all present; "but I must say that I *have* heard rumours relative to the Marchioness of Roehampton by no means creditable to her. It has been stated, that when she first travelled with her husband, she had no legal right to his name."

"Never was there a more false rumour," replied the wife of the English minister, with warmth. "One of my oldest and dearest friends was present at the

marriage, a few days previously to the young couple leaving England, and although they did not wish to enter society until the old marquis, a stern and severe man, had become reconciled to the step his son had taken, there existed no other reason for their seclusion. My friend has known Lady Rochampton from her birth, and this charming young woman never left the roof of her father, a clergyman, esteemed and respected by all who knew him, until at his death she removed to the house of my friend, where she was married. Lady Delmington brought me a letter of introduction from this friend, stating every particular about her; and I have had the greatest pleasure in enjoying as much of her society as the delicate health of her husband and her own interesting position permitted her to give me."

"I confess I have a great prejudice against young women of that class intruding themselves into noble families," observed Lady Wellerby, foiled, and vexed at being so, in her desire to asperse the reputation of the young marchioness, "when there are so many girls of high birth left unmarried. Parsons' daughters may always find husbands among the doctors, apothecaries, curates, or attorneys in their respective parishes; but what are young girls of high birth to do who cannot condescend to marry out of their own sphere!"

"Precisely what many of them do," replied Mrs. Maitland, the lady who gave the *coup de patte* to Lady Wellerby about the Marchioness of Mountserrat, and who bore no good-will to her ladyship—"set all their wits to work to catch some good-natured young man, with more money than brains, flatter and wheedle him into marriage, and then congratulate themselves on their own cleverness in having achieved the desired end."

Lady Wellerby felt the stroke aimed at her, but, aware that she would fare the worst in a war of words with Mrs. Maitland, who was remarkable for a system of plain speaking to those she disliked, her ladyship forbore making any further comment, and her adversary looked around in conscious triumph at having silenced her, aware that Lady Wellerby was so unpopular that no one present would regret her mortification.

"Well, you may all say what you please," observed Lord Wellerby, who had hitherto been talking politics in a corner with his host, but who had heard the comments made on Lady Mountserrat. "I have seldom met with a better natured woman than the Marchioness of Mountserrat. And, after all, I have known many women of high rank—ay, and born to it, too—who were wont to commit as many solecisms in good breeding as she does, yet no one minded *their* coarseness."

"Because *they* had high connexions, and one knew

that their vulgarity did not originate in low birth or want of education," replied one of the ladies present.

"Which should, in my opinion, have aggravated, rather than extenuated their sins," said their host, "as a person with the advantages of birth and education is much less excusable for being vulgar and coarse than one who has unexpectedly attained a position for which her birth and breeding had not fitted her."

"You are perfectly right, perfectly right," observed Lord Wellerby, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "That is precisely what I say. I think Lady Mountserrat much less blameable for any little mistakes she may make than some of the ladies known to us all, but whom I will not name."

He looked at his wife, and she, comprehending that he wished her to say something favourable of the marchioness, remarked, "Really, *I*," laying strong emphasis on the egotistical letter, "can see no reason why Lady Mountserrat should not be well received in society."

"I dare say *you* do not," replied Mrs. Maitland, "for you are fond of cards, and the person in question is, I have heard, willing to make up a rubber. At Newmarket I have been told that noblemen of the highest rank condescend to bet with persons of the

lowest grade, so on this principle I can understand your associating with this low-bred woman; but those who have no such inducement will not be disposed to follow your example;" and Mrs. Maitland withdrew, leaving both Lord and Lady Wellerby highly incensed against her, while the other individuals present were amused at witnessing their discomfiture.

On leaving the minister's they drove to half a dozen places, with the intention of engaging some of their acquaintances to partake the hospitality of the marchioness, but all declined, except two or three young men of fashion, who having no engagements, and being curious to see the wife that their *ci-devant* friend Mountserrat had wedded for her gold, promised to meet the Wellerbys, who were to present them to their hostess.

"I see it's no use endeavouring to get women of rank to make her acquaintance," said Lady Wellerby to her husband, as they returned to their hotel. "Our attempts only draw attacks on us. Did you hear that odious, spiteful Mrs. Maitland?"

"Yes, and if you had the slightest portion of address you ought to have retorted. But you never know what to say! There you sat, getting red in the face, and bridling as you always do when you are vexed, without uttering one word in return for all her impertinence."

"Why did not you, who are so very clever, come to my aid?" demanded the lady, angrily.

"Because a man always looks like a fool when he meddles with the quarrels of women. You drew the whole thing on yourself by your folly in attacking Lady Rochampton, and letting all present see that you were jealous and spiteful, because one of your girls had not caught her husband. You have no tact, Lady Wellerby, and so I have often told you, which is a great misfortune to a woman who is maliciously disposed."

"You are the only person, Lord Wellerby, who ever accused me of want of tact, and the accusation comes with a peculiarly bad grace when you have so lately reaped the benefit of my good management in not only securing a brilliant marriage for our daughter, but in saving you all the expense of her *trousseau*, nay, the cost of the breakfast."

"Ah, there you are, always boasting of your own cleverness! I shall never hear the end of your self-laudations about that marriage, when it was the most natural thing in life that a weak, good-natured fellow like Fitzwarren, who did not know what to do with himself at Rome, should fall into the snare set for him by Olivia, who has ten times more sense and judgment than you have, and to whom all the credit of the affair is due."

Lady Wellerby wrote a little note to the marchioness, to apprise her that three guests, young men of great distinction, as she stated, were to be added to her dinner-party that day.

"I'm glad of it," exclaimed that lady, when Mrs. Bernard had read the note to her. "A fresh face or two will be a relief to me, for I am tired to death of those I daily see. Are you sure you wrote to Mr. Webworth, to say I should be glad to receive him at dinner every day while I stay here?"

"Yes, madam."

"*That's* a sensible man. Understands a good dinner, and good wine, and enjoys them. Order some more champagne to be put in ice, for I dare say these fashionable young men will drink a good deal, and I hate to have any one stinted at my table. Has the *currier* brought back the money for my cheque?"

"Yes, madam, and I have locked it in your ladyship's *coffre*."

"Then put the one hundred pounds in gold into something. Yet no—I'll get a reticule from Justin. So go and ask her for one."

"If your ladyship would permit me to ring the bell," said Mrs. Bernard, timidly, "and have Justine sent for to receive your orders."

"Why, are you so grand that you can't take a message to her?"

"Pray, madam, be assured that my objection to convey your commands to her does not originate in any false pride, but Justine is sometimes so rude to me that I wish as much as possible to avoid coming in contact with her."

"And what do you call this objection on your part but false pride, I should like to know? If Justin is a little saucy sometimes, you must put up with it, I can tell you; for, as I can't do without her, she dresses me so beautifully, and that I could easily get a person to write my notes, and do all that you are employed for, I would sooner, a hundred times, send you away than part from her."

Mrs. Bernard sighed deeply, went on her errand to the *femme de chambre*, and, as she had anticipated, was told by her that "*She* certainly would not give one of *madame la marquise's* beautiful *reticules* to any one but *madame la marquise* herself," which answer induced that lady to go in person to demand it.

"I vish madame vould never send dat odious woman to ask me for noting," said Mademoiselle Justine. "She so proud, so insolent, I cannot put up vid her. I know dat madame had von reticule vid her and not vant anoder, for I tink to myself, vat *madame la marquise* vant vid two?"

"But I *did* want it though, and sent Mrs. Bernard for it."

"*Ah! c'est autre chose.* Dat is oder thing. Vitch vill madame have?" and some two or three dozen richly-embroidered *sacs* of various colours were taken from an armoire and spread before their owner, who selecting a white one, said,

"This will do, Justin, you may lock up the rest."

"*Mon dieu! mon dieu!*" exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, "*madame la marquise* has taken de von dat is de most pretty of dem all. Oh! vat pity to give it avay. It break my heart to see *madame la marquise* give avay de bootiful tings dat is only fit for madame herself to vear," and tears of anger, at seeing what she considered to be one of her own perquisites taken off, filled the eyes of Mademoiselle Justine.

"There, Justin, you may take that dress I wore yesterday, it will match the bonnet I gave you the day before. Don't cry, Justin, I know you are attached to me, and I *won't* send Mrs. Bernard with any more messages to you."

"Ah! I hope *madame la marquise* vill not forget her promise," said Justine, never even thanking her mistress for the expensive dress just given as a peace-offering to her.

"Vat for she vant dat *sacs?*" continued she, when the marchioness retired. "I vill find out, dat I vill. Bah! bah! vat fool I vas not to know in von minute!

De old fool vant it to put de hundred pounds in, dat I did hear her troo de keyhole say she vould give dat horrid Lady Sophie. Ha! ha! she tink to keep de secret from me, but she sall not? I vill know every ting, dat I vill."

CHAPTER LVI.

Paris! woman's Paradise,
Scene of gaiety and pleasure;
That to ev'ry taste supplies
Fashions, without end or measure;
Temple of Frivolity,
Whence *ennui* is ever banished,
Where no rueful face we see
Till the owner's gold is vanished.

"Who do you think is arrived, Livy?" said Lord Fitzwarren one day, as he entered the dressing-room of his wife before dinner. "I will give you twenty, ay, fifty guesses, and you won't divine it."

"And certainly won't try, for I have a horror of guessing, and very little curiosity."

"In that case, I may as well tell you at once. The Marchioness of Mountserrat."

"And what can that be to me? I certainly won't notice her, and so I tell you at once, that you may not make any attempt to change my determination."

"She has not come alone. Your father, mother, and Sophy, have accompanied her, and they seem now to make but one family."

"Good heavens, how dreadful! But are you sure of this, Lord Fitzwarren, or is it one of your *mauvaise plaisanteries*, got up to alarm and shock me?"

"I assure you, Livy, it is the fact. I saw the whole party arrive at the Hotel Windsor, Place Vendome, half an hour ago, and would have stepped in to see the old governor, my lady, and Sophy, only I thought it best to give them time to rest themselves a little after their journey."

"Heaven be thanked that you did *not* call on them, for then they would have found out where we are, and we should be bored by them."

"Bored by your own father, mother, and sister, Olivia? I never heard of such a thing — and after your first separation from them too!" and Lord Fitzwarren's looks denoted the surprise he felt.

"You don't know them as well as I do, or your surprise would cease," observed Lady Fitzwarren. "I am convinced that they are now *en route* for London, contrary to their original intention, purposely because they calculate on living on us there as much as they possibly can, a calculation which I decidedly will defeat. The most effectual mode of doing this is to treat them with such marked coldness here as

will discourage them to intrude themselves on us in London, and for this coldness *they* have furnished us with an admirable excuse in thus associating themselves with that dreadfully vulgar woman, Lady Mountserrat, my horror and aversion of whom is perfectly well known to them."

"Well, Livy, you are a cool hand, I must acknowledge. By Jove, you must make no more of bowing out of the acquaintance of your own family than if they were persons in no way related to you!"

"And why should I, pray?"

"Why, I remember a certain commandment taught me in my childhood, about honouring my father and mother, and I thought that it might possibly have some influence on you."

The lady bit her lip, and looked somewhat embarrassed for a moment, but, quickly recovering her usual effrontery, she reiterated her fixed determination of not calling on her parents, and, if they called, of giving them so cold a reception that they would not be tempted to renew the visit.

"You may do as you like, Livy," replied her good-natured husband, "but I'll be hanged if you shall make me behave ill to them. I never could stand the abominable system of cutting acquaintances, much less relations, so I *will* call on them and show any civility in my power."

"Did you not promise, Lord Fitzwarren, never to engage any guest to dinner without my permission?"

"I could not suppose that your father and mother were included in that compact."

"Then I tell you," and the speaker's face grew red with anger, "that I consider that compact to include my family as well as all other persons, and that if you break it I shall pronounce you to have forfeited your word of honour to me."

"I shall, therefore, to avoid infraction of the promise I so weakly, so stupidly, allowed to be extracted from me in a moment when I dreaded being compromised before a friend, invite those to whom I wish to extend hospitality to some *restaurant's* at Paris, or to the Clarendon Hotel when I am in London; but I assure you, Livy, weak and foolish as you have found me, you shall not persuade me to behave unkindly and improperly to your relations."

Lord and Lady Fitzwarren dined that day at an English nobleman's then resident at Paris, where the arrival of the Marchioness of Mountserrat furnished the topic of conversation. "At my hotel," said a young man of fashion, at table, "the whole house is put in commotion by the event. '*Madame la marquise, riche comme Crœsus, genereuse comme un milord Anglais, avant que les Anglais etoient gâtés par l'economie, et avec une suite enorme,*' might be heard re-

peated from the proprietor of the Hotel Windsor down to the lowest waiter in the house. *Madame la marquise*, as her *courrier* announced, required more rooms and more luxuries than half a dozen ordinary marchionesses; and Heaven only knows how many bottles of champagne had been put into ice, and how large an additional supply of that article had been ordered in, to meet the demand *sa seigneurie* would inevitably make on it."

"I was greatly amused at hearing all this from my valet as I dressed for dinner," said Lord Thomas Murray; "and he told me that the arrival of a queen could not have excited a greater sensation in the hotel. This marchioness, as Mirrafleur, my valet, stated, is so grand a lady that she has an English earl for her chamberlain, a countess for her *dame d'atour*, and a *miladi Anglais* for her lady of the bedchamber."

"This must be an invention of her *courrier's*, to impress the people at the hotel with a higher notion of the importance of his lady," observed Lord Ammondale, a pompous, matter-of-fact man, ever ready to assert the dignity of his order; "for the marchioness, whatever her fortune may be, could find no English lords or ladies who would submit to the degradation of filling such appointments in her household."

"Did you hear the names of these mean members

of the aristocracy," demanded the stately and haughty Lady Llangollen, her Cambrian blood mounting to her face at the idea of any branches of the nobility having so disgraced themselves.

"No, I did not hear the names," replied Lord Thomas Murray. "Mirrafleur, like most of his compatriots, can never remember English names."

Lady Fitzwarren sat on thorns while this conversation was going on, lest the names of her parents should be uttered; not that she entertained the slightest affection or interest for them, but solely on account of the disgrace which their position with the vulgar marchioness would entail on herself.

"I have heard," said Lord Ammondale, "that the Marquis of Mountserrat married some adventuress for her money, and deserted her the moment he had inherited the fortune of his brother."

"Somebody told me she was a ballad-singer, whom some rich old man, a monomaniac about music, heard sing in the streets, became captivated by her voice, and married," observed Lady Ammondale.

"Oh! no. She was one of a party of Irish persons of the lowest class, who came over to England to make hay, and was employed by this rich old citizen at his place near London; when in the hayfield, he heard her sing, and became so charmed that very shortly after he married her, and when dying be-

queathed his immense wealth to her," said Lord Thomas Murray.

"You are all in error, I assure you. This person was a chamber-maid in an hotel at some watering-place, where the rich old man saw her, and wedded her," stated Lady Llangollen; "for I heard all the particulars from the Duchess of Chester, who was staying at the hotel where the marriage was arranged."

Lady Fitzwarren expected every moment that her lord would join in the conversation, and not only acknowledge his acquaintance with the marchioness, but inform the company who the lord and ladies domesticated with her were; but, fortunately for her feelings, he was so deeply engaged in conversing with an old acquaintance, who sat by him, on horses, the subject of all others the most interesting to him, that he paid no attention to the general topic, and she for once rejoiced when she heard the words, "Capital goer," "thorough-bred," "fine action," "great speed," uttered by him, followed by the often-repeated question to his old cronies of "You remember Fanny?—*that was* a creature not to be matched!" and, as usual, a long-winded and elaborate panegyric was pronounced on the never-forgotten favourite mare of her husband. Glad was she when the ladies retired from the *salle-a-manger* without Lord Fitzwarren's having revealed his

and her acquaintance with Lady Mountserrat; and more decided than ever did she feel, in not only avoiding that personage, but also in shunning all intercourse with her family while they lived with her, and seeing as little of them as possible whenever they separated from the marchioness. In accordance with this determination, she gave strict orders to be denied to all English visitors the next day, and congratulated herself on having by this precaution escaped an interview she so much dreaded.

"You will, of course, go and call on Livy as early as you can get out," said Lord Wellerby to his lady wife, as they sat at breakfast. "I have been to Galignani's this morning, and here's their address, which I obtained there. See if you can't get Livy to buy some dresses for Sophy; and if you set about it cleverly, you can."

"I don't anticipate much generosity from Lady Fitzwarren," observed her mother. "Her husband is more likely to behave well."

"Yes; he is such a foolish fellow, that he is always ready to throw away his money; but Livy has more sense."

"If I get no presents until my sister bestows any on me, I shall remain a long time in want of *cadeaux*," said Lady Sophia, with a sneer.

"Well, Livy is not to be blamed for prudence and

economy, two virtues which I did all in my power to inculcate in her mind," observed Lord Wellerby.

"Should she, as I expect, not be disposed to evince any generosity towards her sister, we can, by referring to her want of it, in the presence of Lady Mountserrat, excite *her* into making presents to Sophy, for I have noticed that she is very ostentatious, and wishes to outshine others in acts of generosity," said Lady Wellerby.

"What a bore it is for me to have to go and ask the ambassadress for an invitation for her for the *soirée* at the embassy to-night!" resumed Lady Wellerby.

"Has she not made it well worth your trouble?" demanded her lord. "Has she not franked us the whole route from Rome, and are we not here her guests, without the least necessity of spending a shilling, instead of having expended a large sum on the journey, and being in the worst rooms of some shabby hotel, eating bad dinners and drinking *vin ordinaire?*"

"For all which *désagremens* there does not exist the slightest necessity," said Lady Wellerby, "if you would remember that you have ample means to pay the expenses of your family, without compelling them to submit to the humiliation of forming part of the suite of this vulgar woman, and being included in the ridicule which she must always incur."

"Lady Wellerby, you prove yourself in this instance, as in many others, wholly deficient in tact and common sense. If you possessed the *first*, you could easily manage to gain an introduction for the marchioness into the circles which she so longs to enter, a service she would liberally reward, and if you had the *second*, you would know how to appreciate the advantage of travelling and living, as we do, at another's expense. You had better go first to the ambassador's, to get an invitation for Lady Mountserrat; that point arranged, you can call on Livy afterwards."

"But how am I to get over the fact of Lady Mountserrat never having been presented at the English court?—that is, you know, the *regle* for our ambassadress here receiving ladies."

"You can easily explain that, being married in Italy, and not having been in England since, she could not, of course, be presented in London, but that she will be, as soon as she arrives."

Luckily for Lady Wellerby, the English ambassadress, one of the most kind and amiable women in the world, readily acceded to her request, and the more readily as the Marquis of Mountserrat being a relation of hers, she felt shocked at his desertion of the woman he had duped, and having heard that her moral character was unimpeachable, was glad to show, in this

instance, as in all others where her countenance could be given without infringing on the rules of strict propriety, that good nature for which she was so remarkable. Possessed of the card of invitation, Lady Wellerby returned to the hotel to announce the success of her mission to the marchioness, as that lady had requested her to do.

"Well, now really you *have* behaved very well in this business," said she, when Lady Wellerby gave her the card—for, fearful that she might not have succeeded in obtaining it, the countess had previously explained all the difficulty of accomplishing the point, owing to the marchioness not having been presented at the English court—"And to show you," resumed Lady Mountserrat, "that I am not ungrateful, if you will come with me to the best milliners in Paris, I'll give you the handsomest turban that can be bought, and an elegant dress, and also one for Lady Sophy, with a beautiful wreath of flowers for her hair."

Lady Wellerby's face flushed with offended pride at this openly offered compensation for her having obtained the invitation to the embassy, and there was a degree of *hauteur* she could not wholly repress in her air and countenance when she declared that she required no reward for doing anything to oblige a friend.

"Ah! there it is; I see you are on your high

horse, my lady, and I'm sure I can't tell why, for there's nothing to affront one, according to my notions, in offering some handsome presents; but you ladies of old families have such odd ways that one does not know when one offends you or not."

"I am not at all offended, I assure you," replied Lady Wellerby; "I was only fearful lest you should imagine that I was influenced by selfish motives in my desire to oblige you."

"Well, and after all, where would the harm be if you were? Give and take is my principle. You'll come back, won't you, to accompany me to the milliner's?"

"Yes, certainly, I will be back in time to go with you." And off went Lady Wellerby, her lord, and daughter, to call on Lady Fitzwarren.

"*Madame la comtesse n'est pas chez elle*," was the reply of the porter.

"*Mais êtes vous bien sûr?*" demanded Lady Wellerby, for she felt a conviction that her daughter *was* at home, it being rather early for one so indolent as she knew her to be, to go out. The porter persisted in his statement, and nothing was left for the party but to put their address into his hands, and drive away.

"You see they have found you out, Livy," said Lord Fitzwarren, as the card was placed on his wife's

table. "So now, as you can't accuse me of revealing your abode, I will go off and pay them a visit. What am I to say for you?"

"Say that I am out all day; that I am ill; in short, anything to keep them away from me."

"No, Livy, I'll tell no stories for you, and the fact I *can't* tell; for I should be sorry to hurt their feelings by saying, 'you have a very unkind daughter, who won't see you if she can help it;' yet hang me if I wouldn't sooner tell them the truth, painful as it would be, than invent a pack of falsehoods, or repeat yours to take them in."

"I haven't the least objection—*au contraire*, I should be obliged to you to tell them that as they have disgraced themselves by living with their odious friend Lady Mountserrat, who is the laughing-stock of all Paris, I cannot, consistently with what I owe to myself, mix myself up with them."

"*Un bouquet pour madame la comtesse, de la part de Monsieur le Duc de Beauregard*," said one of the servants, handing in to the *femme de chambre* a most beautiful collection of flowers, artistically and tastefully arranged.

"What exquisite flowers, and how delicate and thoughtful of the *duc*, to whom I happened to mention last night my fondness for them!" observed Lady Fitzwarren.

"What is the fellow's Frenchified name?" asked her lord, looking anything but pleased.

"Beauregard," replied the lady.

"You are rich enough to buy as many flowers as you like, Livy, without being under any compliment to that conceited Frenchman, whose manner towards you, ever since he was presented, I think very impertinent, and so I have made up my mind to tell him on the very first occasion, for I have no notion of seeing any man make love to my wife."

"No one but a person so wholly ignorant as you are of *les bienséances* could possibly imagine that there was the least impropriety in the *duc's* attentions to me."

"*Bien* what?" demanded Fitzwarren, looking puzzled. "You may give it what Frenchified name you like, but I will not allow you to be made the talk, nor myself to be made the laughing-stock, of all Paris, I can tell you. Why, didn't I hear some of the fellows at the embassy the other night gossiping and laughing when they saw this man-milliner-looking Frenchman stuck by your side all the evening. I heard some of them say, 'Look at the *duc* at his old work, making up to every Englishwoman he meets, until he has set all the world talking of her!'"

"Brutes!" exclaimed the lady, "they are all dying of envy and jealousy of his immense superiority over them."

"Superiority, indeed! Well, that's a good un, however. What! compare a d—d outlandish foreigner, with a face all over hair, out of which he seems to peep like an owl out of an ivy-bush, to a parcel of good-looking, healthy Englishmen, who are not ashamed to show their faces, like these Parisian ourang-outangs!" said the offended husband, leaving the room in a more angry mood than his wife had ever before seen him.

"Jealous! positively jealous!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren. "*Mais n'importe*—he shall not prevent me from flirting with this dear, fascinating *duc*. What a delightful man! He said last night he should only go to the embassy this evening to meet me. He *was rather* marked in his attentions, I must confess, and pressed my hand when he led me to my carriage, and asked me why I never drove in the *Bois de Boulogne*, where he always rides, and I half promised to go there to-morrow. Yes; he is a most captivating man—heighho!—and might prove a dangerous one to husbands."

Lady Wellerby and her daughter were ready at the appointed time, to accompany the Marchioness of Mountserrat to some of the most fashionable *magazins des modes* at Paris; and that lady, being in a particularly gracious mood, owing to the invitation to the embassy, presented them both with various costly

additions to their wardrobes. On entering their carriage to return to their hotel, they met Lord Fitzwarren, Lord Wellerby, and Mr. Webworth, who stopped to speak to them. After mutual greetings, the marchioness, "on hospitable thoughts intent," invited Lord Fitzwarren and Mr. Webworth to dine with her.

"And I shall be very glad to see Lady Fitzwarren," added she, "who I dare say will be anxious to meet her mother and sister, who missed her to-day, and, as I suppose she is engaged to the embassy this evening, we can all go there together."

Fitzwarren declined the invitation, but Webworth joyfully accepted it.

"You thee, my dea mawchioneth, I couldn't stay aftew you," said he. "I was quite out of my elementh when you were gone."

"And, I assure you, I have missed *you* very much, Mr. Webworth, at dinner; so, mind, there will be a knife and fork for you every day here, the same as at Rome."

"A thousand thanks, my dea madam."

"Now, if I let Livy know that they are to be at the embassy to-night, she won't go there," thought Lord Fitzwarren to himself. "It will be a good trick to play her not to say a word on the subject, and to let her go there and meet them full plump; hang me if I

don't do so! I'm really ashamed of her, to be so unnatural towards her own parents and sister. And then her flirting so outrageously with that French fellow! I must stop it, or I shall be laughed at by all Paris. What a fool I was to be taken in by such a heartless creature, and so plain a one into the bargain! I hardly knew what to say to her mother and sister when they asked about her."

While these thoughts were passing in the mind of Lord Fitzwarren, Mr. Webworth, after a few minutes' silence, observed that he had never known a more kind and hospitable woman than the Marchioness of Mountserrat. "She weally ith a mosth excellenth pethon, and will in a shawth thime undestand how a table ought to be kept."

"A *table d'hôte*, I suppose you mean," said Lord Wellerby; "for one of her manias seems to be to invite every one she meets to dinner."

"Come, come, old governor; you ought to be the last person to find fault with the old girl's hospitality," remarked Lord Fitzwarren, "since you and your family have availed yourselves so freely of it. Livy has heard some spiteful remarks on this point; people have even gone so far as to say you were her chamberlain, and the old lady and Sophy her ladies-in-waiting, which has so offended Livy that she de-

clares she will not mix herself up with the party while you remain with the marchioness."

"Livy may do as she pleases, a privilege I mean to follow," replied Lord Wellerby; "but as for giving up a very useful acquaintance to please *her*, it is out of the question."

"Only don't blame me if she runs restive, that's all, for she is as wild as a colt, as obstinate as a mule, and as vicious as any animal I ever had in my stable."

"So much the worse for *you*," was the only remark of his father-in-law, who heartily congratulated himself on having got rid of the lady in question.

When the Marchioness of Mountserrat appeared at the embassy that evening, escorted by Lady Wellerby and Lady Sophia, the splendour and quantity of her diamonds, and the extreme richness of her dress, attracted all eyes. "That is the famous Marchioness of Mountserrat, who is so immensely rich," was whispered around by all the English present, and the statement was listened to with eager ears by such of the foreigners as could comprehend the word rich, a word generally understood by most of them.

The presentation to the ambassadress having taken place, Lady Mountserrat seemed by no means inclined to pass on, and leave that lady free to receive her other guests. In vain did Lady Wellerby press

her arm, and make signs to her to move on—there she remained, assuring her noble hostess how glad she was to see her, and hoping that she would come and dine with her in a family way at the Hotel Windsor, where she would give her the best dinner Paris could afford. "I never spare expense, my lady; and why should I!" exclaimed she; while the ambassadress, embarrassed and shocked at a degree of vulgarity to which she had never previously been exposed, cast imploring looks at Lady Wellerby to free her from her friend.

"Who is dat lady vid dose very superb diamonds?" demanded the Duc de Beauregard of one of the *attachés* of the embassy, a lively young man, who, owing a grudge to the *duc*, was well disposed to mystify him.

"That," replied he, "is the richest lady in all England."

"Vat, de Miss Coutts?"

"No, no, a much richer lady."

"Has she a husband?" asked the *duc* eagerly.

"No, her husband is off," was the reply, which the *duc* received as an announcement of the death of the marquis.

"She free, den?" said he.

"Yes, perfectly free, and easy too," observed the *attaché*.

"Richest lady in England, you are sure?" repeated the *duc*.

"Certainly."

"Vill you present me?"

"I have not the honour of being acquainted with the lady, but I know Lady Wellerby, who is with her, and I will present you to her."

"*Mille remercimens, mon cher*," and off they moved. The introduction made, the *duc* begged Lady Wellerby to present him to the marchioness, a favour she readily accorded him, and the complacent smiles of that lady, when she heard the sonorous title of Duc de Beauregard pronounced, proved her satisfaction.

"You speak de French, madame?" demanded the *duc*.

"No, I am sorry to say I don't, but I am learning," was the reply.

"Den how happy I am dat I speak de English a leetle, dat I may converse vid so *charmante* a lady!"

"You are very polite, duke, and I am obliged to you."

"No, madame, it is I who am obliged. I always like de English ladies, but dis evening I have seen one dat do eclipse all I ever did see before," and he looked full in the face of the marchioness.

"Well, I'm sure you are one of the most agreeable men, noblemen I meant to say, I ever met."

"Ah! madam, who vould not die to be tought vell of by you?"

"Base man!" was muttered so close to his ear, that the *duc* turned and beheld Lady Fitzwarren, who, with a look of unutterable contempt, passed on.

"How d'ye do, Lady Fitzwarren?" exclaimed the marchioness. "Here's your mother and sister just behind me. Lady Fitzwarren! Lady Fitzwarren!" said she, so loud as to draw general attention; but Lady Fitzwarren walked on without appearing to hear her, or even looking towards the place where she stood, a line of conduct which the vain *duc* instantly set down to the extreme jealousy of that lady at having overheard his sweet speeches to the marchioness.

"Why, the woman must be deaf," exclaimed Lady Mountserrat, "or she would have heard me. Will you go to her, duke, and tell her that I, the Marchioness of Mountserrat, and her mother and sister, are here, and wish to speak to her?"

"Ah! madame, vat vould I not do to obey *your* commands. *Mais*," and he shrugged his shoulders to his ears, and assumed a look of distress, "*que voulez vous?* Lady Fitzwarren has been so very kind as to find your humble servant vere moche to her taste, and ven she saw that your humble servant did find anoder lady much more to *his* taste, she get so angry, and did

visper in my ear as she passed, 'Base man!' *Pauvre dame*, she is vat you call jealous."

"Oh! then I'll go and tell her she has no cause; but how can a married woman be jealous, except of her husband?"

"*Charmante innocence!*" whispered the *duc*. "Every voman must be jealous ven she look at you."

"Olivia must have heard herself called," said Lady Wellerby to Lady Sophia.

"Yes, certainly; see, she is now leaving the room, I am sure to avoid us. What an unfeeling creature!"

"Give me your arm, Lord Fitzwarren, for I am determined not to stay a moment longer here," said his wife.

"But the carriage is gone, Livy."

"I care not; I will walk—go in a *fiacre*—do anything rather than confront that odious marchioness and my family, who have so disgraced me by being with her."

"And there's your friend, the French duke, making desperate love to the marchioness. I suppose he'll send *her* a cargo of flowers to-morrow?"

"Who could have dreamt of that odious woman's getting to the embassy!—she, who has never been presented in England!" said Lady Fitzwarren. "But

it is a *coup monté* by my abominable mother just to vex me, so I will defeat her schemes by leaving Paris to-morrow, without seeing any of them."

"I am devilish glad of it, for I have had quite enough of Paris, I can tell you," was the answer, as the pair descended the stairs of the embassy, leaving a message that Lady Fitzwarren had been taken suddenly ill, which the Duc de Beauregard accounted for by confidentially whispering to half the men in the embassy "that *la pauvre comtesse etait malade de jalousie.*"

The next day the Fitzwarrens quitted Paris for London, the husband with a lengthened face at the reflection of the enormous sum his wife had expended there, and the lady thoroughly disgusted with Frenchmen, who only the previous day she had thought the most delightful persons in the world.

CHAPTER LVII.

O, Life, how quickly dost thou pass!
E'en while we count on future years,
The last sands flow from stern Time's glass,
And joyous smiles are changed to tears.
Death's ever near, though mortals blind
Behold him not until his dart,
By fate resistless and unkind
Impelled, has pierced some lov'd one's heart.
The old, by length of days oppress'd,
Lay down the load of life, and sleep;
The young, while hope still cheers the breast,
And love and joy their senses steep
In sweet Elysium, must, I ween,
Go hence, and never more be seen,
In the dark grave to dwell, till *He*
Shall summons them *His* face to see.

"This house wants to be thoroughly altered and entirely new furnished," said Lady Fitzwarren to her lord, as they sat at breakfast in the library of the mansion in Grosvenor Square, a few days after their arrival from Paris.

"Then it *shall* want it," replied her husband; "for I'll be hanged if I throw any more money away upon it for some time to come. Why, it was only last year that it was repaired and newly furnished."

"That may be, but it was done in such abominable bad taste that I should be perfectly ashamed to see company in it. And really I must insist on having the portraits of your horses and dogs removed from the walls. Such pictures may suit a bachelor's house, but are inadmissible in a married man's."

"What! would you have my beautiful Fanny's portrait taken down?—that likeness which you so often told me at Rome you longed to see!" and Lord Fitzwarren looked as amazed as he felt.

"My curiosity has now been perfectly satisfied, and therefore I advise you to have these pictures removed to your hunting-lodge at Melton, where they will be more appropriately placed."

"I tell you what, Livy, once for all, they shall *not* be removed. You may decorate your drawing-rooms, boudoir, and dressing-room as you please, but the other apartments shall remain as they are."

"Then I will not enter them," replied the lady, her cheeks flushed with anger, and her eyes flashing with scorn.

"You will do as you please about that, but let me advise you not to exhaust my patience too far. You

have tried it nearly to its utmost limit, I can tell you, and I can't answer for its longer duration."

"And I can assure you, Lord Fitzwarren, that *mine* is already worn out. You bore me to extinction about your horses, dogs, and friends, who are hardly a degree superior to them in intelligence."

Lord Fitzwarren's face became red, and his compressed lips betrayed that he was endeavouring to control the passion that shook him; when his wife, observing the effect she had produced by her taunt, determined to follow it up by a display of cool contempt still more offensive, and began humming a tune.

"So I bore you, do I?" exclaimed he. "And you coolly tell me so, after having taken me in by affecting to like horses as much as I do! You know that I never would have been caught had you not thus imposed on me; but perhaps you do *not* know, and it is high time that you should hear a truth which my good-nature would have kept concealed, had you not provoked me too far, that it was only a sense of honour and pity that induced me to fulfil an engagement with you into which your flattery and pretence of similarity of tastes with my own led me, in a moment of folly, to form, and which I regretted, from the bottom of my heart, ever since!"

"This well-bred confession excites only my contempt. But let *me* not be deficient in the amiable

candour and frankness of which you have set me so good an example. Know then that, whatever may have been *your* indifference to me, *mine* towards you fully equalled it."

"But did I flatter or court you? Did I affect to have a sympathy with *your* tastes or pursuits? No, I should scorn such hypocrisy and meanness, even to win the hand of a woman I loved. From the hour I married you, I have noticed that you threw off the mask of affection and devotion to my wishes, with which, fool as I was, you caught me, and I began to see that I was your dupe; but *now* that you have acknowledged your heartless and shameless duplicity, you shall find that I *am* and *will be* master of my own house."

"And you shall find that I am not a woman to be frightened by your violence and brutality. I know what is due to myself, and will exact it, too, I can tell you."

Lord Fitzwarren arose from the table, and left the room in a state of anger and agitation he had never previously experienced; while his countess walked to the mirror over the mantelpiece, and arranged the bows of her Parisian morning-cap, uttering, *sotto voce*, the monosyllable "brute!"

"Well," resumed she, as she contemplated her own image in the glass, "the mask is now thrown off on

both sides, and this will be a relief, though, Heaven knows, I took little pains to wear it since we left Rome! But really the man is too *bête*, and it was quite time we should come to an understanding, now that the honeymoon has nearly waned to its last phase. I only waited to get possession of the family diamonds, and the money for my *trousseau* and *corbeille*, before I enlightened him as to the state of my feelings, which any one who was not utterly stupid would, long ere this, have found out; but men are so vain that they never discover our indifference, unless we force the knowledge on them."

The unbounded generosity and good-nature of Lord Fitzwarren had failed to produce any softening effect, or any good-will or gratitude, in the callous breast of his selfish wife. Aware, from the first moment of their engagement, that he loved her not, far from feeling grateful for his kindness and liberality, she despised him for having been caught so easily in the toils she had so artfully laid to entangle him, and piqued herself on the success of her schemes. At Paris she had satisfied almost to satiety her passion for dress and trinkets; and her husband, conscious of his own indifference for her, and desirous to atone for the involuntary wrong, had pleasure, during the first fortnight of their sojourn there, in lavishing on her every gift that struck her fancy, saying to himself, "Poor

Livy, though I can't love her, I can at least gratify all her tastes!" He attributed the ungracious change in her manner to her having discovered, in spite of his endeavours to conceal it, that she was not loved as brides expect to be, and this belief begot a pity and kindness on his part that gratitude on hers might have ripened into a good-will and friendship, that would have insured the comfort of their future lives.

But Lady Fitzwarren's was not a heart or mind susceptible of kindly emotions. Her vanity was wounded by finding that not even the display of affection and devotion which she affected to feel towards her affianced husband had created the slightest sentiment of admiration in him, and far from appreciating the honourable motives and good-nature which induced the fulfilment of his engagement, she hated him with an intensity that rendered it difficult for her to control the demonstrations of dislike which were ever ready to escape on the least provocation on his part.

"Why, why did I marry?" burst from the lips of Lord Fitzwarren, when he found himself alone. "Oh, what a dupe, what an idiot I have been! And to find, after all, that she never loved me! How I loathe her, now that I know her duplicity, her calculating coldness of heart! But she shall no longer dupe me; no, henceforth I will be firm, and prove to her that I *will* be master of my house and fortune."

The angry husband left his home in the hope that change of scene might banish the gloomy thoughts that oppressed him, and sought at his club some of the old associates with whom he had been wont, in his bachelor days, to while away many of his hours. The Marquis of Mountserrat was one of the first of his former friends whom he encountered lounging in his accustomed seat in the bay-window at White's. "Ah, Fitz, glad to see you; heard you were come. Why, you look as doleful as a broken-down gamester after losing his last hundred, or a young bridegroom on the day of his nuptials with a rich old woman."

"And you, Axy, seem as happy as if you had heard of the death of a certain lady whom I left in high force at Paris some five or six days ago."

"Name her not, if you love me, Fitz. I had become oblivious of her very existence, until you, like a d—d good-natured friend, came and reminded me of it. But, as you *have* disturbed the equanimity of my temper on this point, I may as well learn what the lady is about. Have I any chance of being relieved by a bilious fever, or apoplexy, brought on by the excessive indulgence of her enormous appetite?"

"I cannot hold out any prospect of such good fortune to you, for it seems

> 'As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on,'

as the man in the play said, and with her, a

> ' Good digestion waits on appetite,
> And health on both.' "

"By Jove, Fitz, you grow poetical! Who would have dreamt of hearing you quote Shakspere?"

"I have quoted Shakspere, have I? Well, I didn't know whose the lines were, but I remembered them because Mordaunt won a wager from Kirby about them, and the words were written down and given to me until the wager was decided."

"I suppose she was *au désespoir* at my flight?"

"I saw no symptoms of it. *Au contraire*, she expressed her satisfaction at having acquired a marquisate without being saddled with a marquis."

"The monster!" exclaimed Lord Mountserrat; "how I hate her! I suppose you are the happiest of men, Fitz. Eh? This supposition is not, however, founded on your countenance, but on the high notion I have formed of the happiness of wedlock, when *congenial* minds are united in its bonds."

The sarcastic sneer on the face of the marquis convinced Lord Fitzwarren of the ironical intention of the speech, and displeased him.

"I am not more unhappy than other men in similar circumstances," replied he. "It is their own faults, if men are such fools as to be made miserable by women."

"Bravo, Fitz!—there spoke my old friend. I honour you for your philosophy and firmness; and the more so, because I know that your fair countess, even as Lady Olivia Wellerby, was by no means deficient in a will of her own. I must call and pay my respects to her to-day."

"Ay, do; and if, as an old acquaintance, you could just hint to her that I am a devilish determined sort of fellow, it might save future contests for power between us."

"What, my friend, have you already commenced a civil war—of all wars the most inveterate and implacable?"

"No, not quite that; but women *are* prone to seek power, just as horses endeavour to master their owners. You remember Fanny? The finest animal I ever had in my possession; yet she often tried to have her own way. Poor Fanny! I shall never like any creature as much as I liked her!"

"A most ungallant speech for a Benedict not yet two months wedded, I must say," observed the marquis.

"You have doubtlessly heard of Strathern's luck? And most apropos did it come. He had got into great embarrassment; had overbuilt himself, accepted bills, gave away thousands to that stupid fool Olliphant, and was, in fact, dished, when, happily for him, Lord Argentyn and his three sons were drowned

in a squall, returning to shore at the Isle of Wight, from their yacht; and so that prig, Strathern, steps into a noble fortune."

"Why, I always thought Strathern as rich as a Jew. I am devilish glad, however, that he has come off so well, for he's an excellent fellow. And so poor Olliphant is ruined! At play, I suppose?"

"Yes, at play, and on the turf. Regularly cleaned out, as we say."

"And like all who are so, he is called a fool by those who won his money!"

"*Que voulez vous, mon cher?* It is the way of the world."

"And a d——d bad way. Poor Olliphant was an excellent fellow, and no one's enemy but his own."

"The man who is his own enemy is every one's enemy, Fitz; for when he has ruined himself, as generally happens, he expects his friends are to come forward to help him, and so bores, if he does not impoverish them, and what the devil can an enemy do more?"

"You are a hard-hearted fellow, Axy, which I did not think you. When you were hard up, you would have thought it d——d unkind had any friend used the selfish arguments you have now expressed. Had I been in England, I would certainly have helped poor Olliphant, and I'm devilish glad that Strathern, who

behaved well to him, has now stepped into a fine fortune, for he will make a good use of it."

At four o'clock on the same day that witnessed the interview between the Marquis of Mountserrat and Lord Fitzwarren, the former found himself seated in the boudoir of the wife of the latter.

"And are you happy, dear Olivia?" demanded he, assuming a pensive air; for, piqued by the well-merited reproof of her husband in the morning, which he had not the manliness to resent, he was vile enough to desire to avenge himself by making love to the wife, with whom he had formerly carried on a flirtation.

"Happy!" reiterated the lady. "Who could be happy with such a man?"

"Ah, Olivia! had my brother died before my poverty compelled me to wed that dreadful woman who bears my name, *we* might now have been happy!" And the artful *roué* looked in the face of Lady Fitzwarren and sighed deeply.

"So you now say; but your altered manner, your indifference for a long time previously to your having seen that person, proved that you had lost all affection for me, if, indeed, you ever entertained any, which I now greatly doubt."

"Cruel woman, thus to misjudge and reproach me for the very conduct which best vouched for the warm, the disinterested attachment I bore you! Poor, and

deeply in debt, would it not have been dreadful on my part to seek to draw you into a marriage with me, which must have entailed nothing but privation and poverty on you? Could I have borne to see you, formed as you are to fill the most distinguished place in society, compelled to drag on existence deprived of all the elegances, nay, even the comforts, that render it supportable?"

"But you were next heir to your brother, your prospect of inheriting his fortune was a very good one, and, had we married, our relations must have done something for us. You see, as things have turned out, we should not, had we wedded, been long condemned to the inconvenience of straitened finances; but you did not love me, and now only profess to have done so because you know that, married as we both are, the truth of your professions cannot be tested."

"Oh, Olivia! dearest, loveliest of women, would that we were at this moment free, and gladly, proudly, would I entreat your acceptance of my hand! I am wretched enough, Heaven knows, at seeing you the wife of another—of one, too, who does not, cannot appreciate you as I do, without your thus cruelly doubting an affection that embitters my life."

"I ought not to listen to you. What avails such declarations now?"

But there was so little of the dignity of offended virtue, or feminine delicacy, in the air and manner of Lady Fitzwarren, that her profligate suitor felt rather encouraged than checked in his advances by this faint attempt at decorum on her part.

"Can you be so barbarous as to ask such a question, Olivia? Is it not a relief when the heart is oppressed with sorrow to pour out its griefs to one who may pity them? Were Fitzwarren worthy of you—could he but render you happy, I might be able to conceal in my own tortured breast the pangs I feel. But when I see his utter indifference to your charms ere he has yet two months called you bride—when I heard him no later than this very day declare that he never liked any creature half so well as his mare Fanny—nay, more, proclaim that he was determined to be sole master of his house and fortune, which means nothing less than that he will treat you, fairest and dearest of your sex! as his slave—how, how can I control the pangs that fill my breast?—how forbear telling you that I love—I adore you!"

"And did he tell you this?" demanded Lady Fitzwarren, her lip trembling with rage, and her face becoming suffused with crimson.

"I swear to you he did; but you have it in your power to be avenged. He who slights such beauty as yours deserves the heaviest punishment that can befal

him. Take pity on one who adores you, lovely Olivia, and let my devoted affection console you for the ill-assorted marriage you have made!"

The Marquis of Mountserrat, while uttering this speech, into which he threw as much passionate tenderness as he could assume, fell on his knees before Lady Fitzwarren, and, seizing her hand, was in the act of covering it with kisses, when her husband entered the room. The marquis attempted to laugh off the awkward situation in which he had been detected, and the lady, somewhat abashed, stammered something unintelligible in excuse for it. For a moment Lord Fitzwarren was speechless with anger and disdain, and then, turning to his wife, he said, "After the scene I have just witnessed, this is the last time I will ever consent to see you again. For you, my lord, words are weak to express my contempt. You shall hear from me in an hour, and unless you are as deficient in courage as you are in honourable principles, you shall give me satisfaction."

So saying, Lord Fitzwarren quitted the room, leaving his countess and *ci-devant* friend the marquis, greatly agitated and embarrassed.

"See what you have done!" exclaimed the lady. "My reputation will be destroyed, my position in society lost, and all because you choose to throw yourself at my feet, when you could just as well have said

all you wished while sitting quietly on your chair, when his entrance could not have been of the least consequence."

"You are not the only sufferer," replied the marquis, looking anything but lover-like. "My life will be endangered, or I may kill Fitzwarren, which will compel me to leave England, and abandon the enjoyment of my recently-inherited possessions."

"Go! leave me quickly," said Lady Fitzwarren, "and do not write to me, or approach this house. I must take care not to compromise my reputation, already endangered, if not lost, by your mad passion."

"One word, Olivia," said Lord Mountserrat, his vanity desperately wounded by her coldness and calculation at such a moment, "I was only amusing myself by enacting a scene in a comedy to which Fitzwarren's *mal-à-propos* entrance has given rather a tragic character. *I did not, do not*, love you. *He* had offended me, and I wished to avenge myself by making a fool of *you*. That was all."

"Leave the room, wretch!—monster of iniquity!—or I will have you expelled by my servants," cried the lady, stamping her foot, and almost choked with passion, an order the marquis promptly obeyed, uttering, as he withdrew—

"Mind, in future, *ma belle*, never let your lovers,

should you attract any, leave their chairs while making you declarations."

"Wretch, monster, how I loathe and abhor him!" exclaimed Lady Fitzwarren, as the door closed after Lord Mountserrat. "I would give worlds that Fitzwarren should shoot him;" and here a flood of tears, excited by wounded vanity and anger, filled her eyes. But a few minutes' reflection reminded her of the necessity of taking some steps to preserve her reputation, and it occurred to her that the best one would be to order her carriage and go out to pay visits, which she did as soon as possible, affecting such gaiety that those with whom she conversed remarked that matrimony had greatly exhilarated her spirits.

That very night she appeared, glittering in diamonds at a ball, and danced with more than usual animation, while her husband and his perfidious friend were arranging the necessary preliminaries for a hostile meeting the next morning, in which the lives of one or both might pay the forfeit of the treachery of the marquis. When questioned on the absence of her lord, she said that he was engaged at cards with some friends, and regretted that play had more attraction for him than balls; "but he is so kind and good," added Lady Fitzwarren, "that I can't bring myself to oppose his wishes."

Her scheme perfectly succeeded. Many wondered

at the negligence of a husband who could, so soon after marriage, let his wife go out alone; and all pitied the woman whose husband's time was devoted to play, and who yet evinced such gentleness when referring to that painful circumstance. In short, Lady Fitzwarren enacted the *rôle* of an amiable, cheerful woman so well, that she gained the good opinion of several who, previously to her marriage, had regarded her with dislike; and when the evening papers, on the following day, announced that a duel, attended with fatal results, had that morning taken place at Wimbledon Common, between the Marquis of Mountserrat and the Earl of Fitzwarren, in which the former was dangerously wounded, and the latter shot through the heart, numerous were those who expressed their sympathy for the bereaved widow, and dwelt with pity on her harmless gaiety the previous night, to be followed so soon by so dreadful a catastrophe. Uncountable were the inquiries about her health made at her door, and for the next two days she was the subject of a general interest, which would, probably, have lasted two days more, had not the fall of a favourite *danseuse* on the stage, which occasioned a sprained ancle, eclipsed it. The Marquis of Mountserrat lingered three days, and expired while suffering amputation of the right arm.

The assertion of Lady Fitzwarren that her lord was

engaged at play the last night of his life gave rise to a report, extensively circulated, that a dispute between him and the Marquis of Mountserrat at the gaming-table had led to the duel; and as no one except Lady Fitzwarren was acquainted with the real cause, this rumour gained increased belief, and people, while pitying "the poor bereaved widow," as she was styled, added "that, perhaps, everything considered, it was as well that her husband died before he had ruined himself, and her, too; an event which, from his devotion to play, they looked on as inevitable." Thus, the well-meaning, good-natured, but unthinking peer descended to an untimely grave, stamped as a gambler, and unlamented, save by Strathern and a few of his former friends, who knew his goodness of heart; while his artful and unfeeling wife came into possession of the large dower settled on her by her generous lord, and was looked on as an amiable woman, greatly to be pitied in losing a husband to whom she was much attached.

Strathern, having now come into the noble fortune of Lord Argentyn, paid off the account of Mr. Drinkwater, who, rather, as he declared, than forfeit the good opinion of a gentleman of such distinguished taste as Mr. Strathern, consented to accept some thousands less than his original demand; and Mr. Papworth, whose advice his client followed on this occa-

sion, entered into an arrangement for the immediate completion of Strathern House by contract.

Lord and Lady Delmington, now Marquis and Marchioness of Roehampton, arrived in England in due time from Naples, the health of the marquis greatly improved by the sea voyage recommended by his physicians, and bringing with them their infant son, now some two months old. Most cordial and affectionate was the meeting between them and Strathern. But when was happiness without alloy? The marquis, blessed with all that could render life enjoyable, was haunted by the dread that his disobedience had shortened the days of his father, and, as he looked on his own child, he prayed that he might not be punished in him. The marchioness, a doting wife and happy mother, looked more beautiful than ever, and remained as unsophisticated and unaffected as when, a timid, weeping bride, Lord Delmington had led her to the altar.

A few days after their arrival in London, the chaplain of the late marquis, a worthy and pious man, waited on the amiable pair, and placed in the hand of Lord Roehampton a short letter, written by his dying father, the day previous to his death. In it he expressed his deep regret that his own obduracy had deprived him of the comfort of seeing his dear son before he closed his eyes for ever, and bequeathed to

him, in the most affectionate terms, his forgiveness and blessing, which were also extended to his daughter-in-law. The tears that fell on this precious token of pardon and paternal love proved how deeply it was appreciated, and healing was the balm it infused into the wounded hearts of the amiable young couple, who, no longer weighed down by the dread of a father's curse, felt the truest gratitude for his having at last relented in their favour.

In a few weeks after, the *Morning Post*, the chronicle of fashionable intelligence, announced the arrival of the Marchioness of Mountserrat and suite in London. The marquis having died intestate, and never having executed any marriage settlement, the widowed marchioness came over to England, post-haste, to claim her thirds of his property, to which her legal advisers informed her she was entitled. Great was her satisfaction at finding herself once more free; not that she had suffered any restraint from the matrimonial shackles she had lately worn, but she had been haunted by a dread that, great as was her unprincipled lord's fortune, his extravagance and love of play might one day lead to the necessity of his having recourse to hers, and she had often trembled at the possibility of this contingency. But now, to be not only relieved from this dread, but to come into the possession of a great increase of income, was, she considered, a piece

of wonderful good luck; and, in her gratitude for it, she made her *dame de compagnie*, Mrs. Bernard, a present of five thousand pounds, and bestowed a gift of a similar amount on Mademoiselle Justine. Mr. Webworth, who, at Naples and Paris, had rendered himself useful to Lady Mountserrat in inspecting her bills of fare, and declining all other dinner-engagements in order to accept hers, followed her to England, where, having learned her large accession to fortune, he ventured to hint how much he stood in need of an increase to his very scanty income.

"I have been thinking of you," said the marchioness; "and if you will take holy orders, I will purchase you the presentation to a living, and appoint you my chaplain; for every great lady has, I hear, a chaplain."

Webworth declined this proposal; and having convinced the lady of the utter impracticability of its being carried into execution, she consented to allow him two hundred a year and a seat at her table, which, with the annuity formerly settled on him by his deceased friend, Lord Fitzwarren, enabled him to live with comfort, in the enjoyment of those luxuries for which he had been always willing to barter his self-respect.

"Well, Justin, what do you think now?" said the marchioness. "You see my marriage was not, after

all, a bad one. First, I got a fine title, and now comes a good fortune."

"I tink *madame la marquise* merits all de good fortune in de vorld, for dere is no ladi so generous, so *aimable*, or so bootiful; and so I know tought de Duc de Beauregard. Vot hansome man, and how he lofe *madame la marquise!*"

"Do you really think he loved me much, Justin?"

"Tink, *madame la marquise!* Vy, he positively adored you. *Ah! le pauvre duc!*"

"So poor Lady Sophia Wellerby used to say. I'm sure, Justin, *she* was very fond of me, for she used to say such agreeable things to me! She always made me feel satisfied with myself."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* vas deceived. Lady Sophie veri fause voman. She vant to rival you in de heart of de Duc de Beauregard, and I hate her, for she laugh at *madame la marquise* vid all the milords and miladis, vich I did hear from de *femmes de chambres* of several of dem who heard it from de *maitres d'hotels* who vere present."

"Yes, so you said, but I can't believe it; besides, what should she find in *me* to laugh at?"

"Dat is *precisement* vat I say. But dey told me dat she said such spiteful tings, such vicked tings, as I could not repeat. I could forgive moche, but to say dat *madame la marquise* vas so veri ugly, and have red hair—oh! dat vas too bad!"

"What a false, ungrateful creature, and after pretending to love me so much!"

"Ah! *madame la marquise* must never make friendships vid ladies of *de haute famille*, for dey are all envious, and vill betray her."

"But yet, Justin, Lady Sophia so often told me that she loved me better than any one in the world, and entrusted me with such family secrets, that I cannot bring myself to believe she was false. Perhaps the servants who told you did not speak truth."

"Ah! *madame la marquise*, dey spoke only de truth—dat vicked ladi only lofed you for *les cadeaux*, dat is de presents, and for your moneys."

"Then she shall never have another present from me, and I will scratch out her name from my will, which she made me put in it."

CHAPTER LVIII.

The mariner, by many an adverse gale
And angry billow tossed upon the main,
Far, far from land, how joys he when his sail
With fav'ring breeze turns to his home again!
So those who've struggled on the troubled sea
Of life, rejoice when once again they near
The haven where they long have yearn'd to be,
The port to all their hopes and wishes dear.
And ev'ry danger past, enjoy sweet rest,
Conscious of blessing, and of being blest.

Though anxious to return to Sydney Park, Mrs and Miss Sydney were detained by business, consequent on their late inheritance, which required their frequent presence in London, and they preferred remaining at Thames Grove to taking up their abode in the metropolis, to which place they drove two or three times a week. Mr. Wandsworth one day mentioned to Mrs. Sydney that he had the previous one made a curious discovery.

"I hesitated, madam, whether or not I could communicate it to you without a breach of confidence," said that worthy man; "but good actions, and especially those performed in secret, are too rare not to merit notice. Previous to Mr. Sydney's death, and when exaggerated rumours were afloat respecting the difficulties in which you and Miss Sydney were plunged through the loss of her estates, a gentleman one day called on me, and wished to place in my hands a considerable sum, to be paid annually, as he said, for your joint use. I, of course, declined to accept it, assuring him of the fact that you did not stand in need of assistance, and he then requested that the circumstance should not be named to you. He did not entrust me with his name, but his appearance and manner were so prepossessing, that he left a very favourable impression on my mind. I yesterday was speaking to Mr. Papworth in the street, when this same gentleman drove past with another, and I, instantly recognising him, inquired if Mr. Papworth could inform me of his name.

"'That is the richest of my clients, Mr. Strathern, who has within a few days inherited the large estate of the late Lord Argentyn,' said Mr. Papworth.

"'What, the gentleman for whose use I lately offered you a loan on the part of one of my clients?' asked I.

"'The same,' replied he."

"And has Mr. Strathern really inherited a large fortune?" inquired Mrs. Sydney.

"Such is the fact, madam."

"I am truly glad of it, for his sake, and the more so now that I know his kind and thoughtful intentions towards my daughter and myself, when he believed that we stood in need of his generosity."

"Ay, madam, and we must not forget that, at the very time he came to lodge a large sum in my hands for your use, he was under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, which, though only of a temporary nature, as Mr. Papworth explained to me, were, nevertheless, of a painful kind, and exposed him to the mortification of being arrested."

"Good, kind Strathern!" exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, "how fully has he justified the opinion I formed of him! I thank you, Mr. Wandsworth, for having communicated the fact of his visit to you and its motive. Such actions should not be concealed from those whom they were meant to serve."

When Mr. Wandsworth had departed, Mrs. Sydney joined her daughter in the pleasure-ground, and communicated to her all that he had related. A bright colour rose to Louisa's face, but she made no comment on Strathern's generous intentions in her and her mother's favour.

"Was it not kind and thoughtful of him?" demanded Mrs. Sydney, somewhat disappointed by the silence of her daughter.

"I am not surprised," replied she; "want of generosity is not among the failings of Mr. Strathern. I am heartily glad of his accession to fortune, for his is a spirit that would not be happy with limited means, after having been accustomed to large ones."

Strange to say, Louisa was *not* greatly pleased at hearing that her former lover had come into possession of a vast fortune. Not that she did not wish that all good might be his; but, while believing him to be poor, and assailed by the most humiliating of all annoyances, importunate creditors, she thought herself justified in lavishing on him a pity and interest, the motive of which she cheated herself into the belief was founded solely on compassion, when, the truth was, it originated in a much more tender sentiment. Now that Strathern's pecuniary difficulties no longer offered an excuse for the all-engrossing interest she had lately experienced about him, the state of her own heart became more than ever revealed to her, and she was sorry to find that henceforth she should have no plea for continually thinking of him when alone, and talking of him with her mother, as she had for some time been accustomed to do, and which had been a secret source of pleasure to her. No, the rich Strathern

could no longer be an object of pity, and, consequently, his name must be a prohibited one from their conversation.

Mrs. Sydney, with all a woman's *finesse* and quickness of apprehension, divined what was passing in the mind of her daughter; while the latter, silent and pensive, urged the excuse of a nervous headache, that never-failing apology for low spirits, for not being in a more communicative mood. But, though Louisa avoided speaking of Strathern, she could not banish him from her thoughts; and she was forced to confess to herself, after a nearly sleepless night, that the rich man occupied her mind quite as much as when he had been poor. She wondered where was now that fair but sinful woman with whom she left him at Como, yet was angry with herself for bestowing a single thought on one so unworthy. What could it now be to *her* where she was? Nothing, positively nothing. Nevertheless, she felt that she would give thousands to know that Strathern had shaken off that immoral connection; for his own sake alone she wished it—so at least she persuaded herself, for, as she again and again mentally asserted, it could be nothing to her. How painful was it that she could never think of him without the hateful recollection of that woman intruding itself! Yet how beautiful she was! It was no wonder that Strathern yielded to her seductive

charms. What man could resist them, when *she* — a woman, and a jealous one she in her heart of hearts acknowledged herself to be — was compelled to admit that she had never previously beheld such loveliness.

These reflections were little calculated to encourage the approach of "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep;" and the beams of an autumnal sun shone brightly through her windows, before Louisa Sydney closed her weary eyes in slumber. When she did, her dreams were influenced by the painful thoughts that had occupied her when awake. Again the lovely object of her jealousy seemed to stand before her, leaning on the arm of Strathern, who appeared so engrossed by her as to be wholly regardless of the presence of his betrothed wife; and Louisa, starting from her pillow, rubbed her eyes, almost expecting to see the two persons of whom she dreamt stand before her. "It was but a dream," murmured she, "but oh! what a painful one! Would that I could banish that woman for ever from my memory!"

Lord and Lady Rochampton pressed Strathern so much to accompany them to Rochampton Castle, that he at length assented to their wishes. He found in their society the only antidote to the gloom that pervaded his mind, a gloom engendered no less by the severe disappointment experienced in his affections than by the knowledge of the world, forced on him by

his temporary embarrassment. The bandage which had hitherto concealed the dark realities of life, and kept in shade the fickleness and heartlessness of mankind, had been torn from his eyes for ever by the rude hand of adversity; and, though the visit of that stern monitor had been but brief, the experience it had brought him was not of a nature to allow his natural cheerfulness to be soon restored, even had he not another and deeper cause for despondency in the inexplicable conduct of the woman he still so fondly loved.

The attachment of two such friends as Lord and Lady Roehampton was a balm to Strathern's heart. Filled with the liveliest gratitude for his brotherly regard and boundless generosity towards them, this amiable pair lavished on him the most delicate and unceasing marks of attention; and he for a short time forgot his own cares in the satisfaction which he experienced at witnessing their reception at Roehampton Castle, and the domestic happiness they were enjoying. The grandeur of her stately home, and the respectful deference with which she was treated by the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, who flocked to visit her as soon after her arrival as etiquette permitted, produced no change in the simple and unpresuming woman, whose whole happiness consisted in her husband and child, and who, undazzled by the

gauds of wealth, rank, and splendour, proved every hour, and by every action of her life, that love, and love only, had influenced her when she wedded the heir to the princely dwelling and broad domains of which she was now the happy and honoured mistress.

The fond husband was prouder of his wife than of all his other possessions; and, as he marked how rapidly her artless sweetness of manner conquered the prejudices of those who had previously imagined that a perfect equality of station was requisite to happiness in wedded life, he would sigh with regret that his father, who had accorded him so full a pardon for the only act of disobedience he had ever committed, had not lived to know and love the gentle and amiable being who would have proved so duteous a daughter to him. It was a pleasant sight to behold this youthful couple so happy in themselves, anxious to extend happiness to those around them. Each day witnessed some step taken in advancement of the instruction and comfort of the poor: schools formed, almshouses endowed, and private charities judiciously administered. Often would Strathern think what pleasure it would have afforded him to have seen Louisa—*his* Louisa, as, in spite of all that had occurred, he would fain still call her — united by the bonds of friendship with the amiable and excellent Lady Roehampton.

The Duke and Duchess of Nevillecourt, who were

the nearest neighbours to Roehampton Castle, were so fascinated by the winning graces of the marchioness, that habits of intimacy were soon formed between the two families, and they frequently dined together. Lord and Lady Roehampton and their guest had accepted an invitation to dinner at Neville-court on a certain day, to meet some of the neighbouring families of distinction. On arriving, they found the party assembled in the library, and after the first greetings were over, a Lady Donnington, the mistress of a fine seat a few miles distant, addressing Lady Roehampton, said, "You must, my dear lady, permit me to present to you two very dear friends of mine, who only came to me yesterday. Lady Roehampton, Mrs. and Miss Sydney."

Both mother and daughter positively started with surprise when, in the beautiful woman before them, they recognised the well-remembered face of the companion of Strathern at the Coliseum. Lady Roehampton also recognised Miss Sydney; and the unaccountable coldness, to call it by no harsher name, of that young lady at their interview at Como flashing across her mind at the instant, gave a timidity to her manner that, coupled with the evident surprise of Mrs. and Miss Sydney, somewhat embarrassed Lady Donnington.

While this scene was occurring in one corner of the

large library, Strathern, who had, after making his bow to the duchess, stopped to speak to some of the men, now came forward, and who can express his surprise when his eyes met those of Mrs. Sydney and Louisa—the face of the latter appearing radiant, so bright were the blushes that suffused her cheeks, and the lustre that sparkled in her eyes as they met his gaze! He stood confounded, and hesitating whether to approach, when Mrs. Sydney smiled, and bowed to him with such cordiality that he walked up and took her offered hand. Louisa also extended hers, tremulous with emotion, and as he pressed it he felt his heart throb with delight.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Sydney. "We only arrived on a visit to my relation, Lady Donnington, yesterday, and found an engagement to accompany her here to dinner to-day, the Duchess of Nevillecourt being an old friend of mine. You are, I suppose, staying in the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, I have been for some time on a visit to my friends, Lord and Lady Roehampton, whose seat is only a few miles distant."

How eagerly did Louisa listen to the conversation carrying on between her mother and Strathern! The presence of the never-forgotten lady she had seen at the Coliseum and at Como, in that circle, and intro-

duced to her by Lady Donnington as the Marchioness of Roehampton, convinced her that hitherto *she* must have been labouring under some strange and terrible mistake; and, if so, how had she wronged Strathern! Bitterly, however, had *she* suffered from the mistake. Long months of chagrin had been her portion; and if she had injured her lover by her suspicions, as she now believed she must have done, *he* was to blame for the mystery and concealment he had made relative to his presence with Lady Roehampton. Oh! how much misery would have been saved to both had he been more frank and confidential with her! But why had he stooped to prevarication? What could be the motive for such extraordinary conduct?

Such were the reflections that suggested themselves to Louisa, as, with a beating heart, she listened to every word that dropped from the lips of Strathern. Never sounded the most perfect music so sweetly to her ears as did now his accents. She forgot that she was surrounded by strangers, that as yet nothing had been explained, in the joy of hearing her lover converse once more with her mother in tones of renewed amity. But, if Louisa experienced surprise and delight at this unexpected encounter, what were the feelings of Strathern? Astonishment at the kind reception he met with both from mother and daughter was succeeded by unmingled delight. What could have led

to this happy, this blessed change? Had they discovered that they had wronged him, and had they repented their injustice and cruelty? Yes, it must be so; and, proud as was his nature, he felt that in the joy, the transport of being again restored to the affection of her on whom, in spite of all her cruelty, he still doted, he could pardon and forget all the misery he had for so many months borne.

"How long has Lord Roehampton been married?" asked Mrs. Sydney.

"Some fourteen or fifteen months," replied Strathern.

"Then he was married when he passed through Rome," observed Mrs. Sydney. "Did Lady Roehampton then accompany him?"

"Yes; but as their marriage was a private one, and had not then been acknowledged to his father, a stern and severe parent, I was not at liberty to reveal it until it had first been disclosed to him."

"Ah! now I understand all," said Mrs. Sydney. "Would to Heaven that you had at the time confided this secret to me!"

At this moment dinner was announced, and a general movement was the consequence. Strathern hovered near Louisa, who, trembling with joyful emotion, felt that never had she loved him so tenderly as at this moment, when, conscious of the injustice of all her former suspicions, and filled with gratitude for the

sincere and unchangeable affection on his part, which had withstood an ill-treatment on hers, for which he could not even imagine a cause, he stood near her with eyes sparkling with the same love as ever, shewing in every glance that he was ready to renew those vows which her pride and jealousy had broken. Her countenance was so expressive of her feelings, that Strathern ventured to offer her his arm, to lead her to the *salle-à-manger*. She accepted it with eagerness; and, as he felt her snowy arm tremble on his, he could not resist asking her, in accents so low that no ear but hers could hear them, "May I hope?"

"Yes, dearest Henry; but you have much to pardon," was the whispered reply; and the fair arm that rested on his was gently pressed. O! how the lover longed to throw himself at the feet of his adored mistress, to thank her for this blessed avowal! He seemed to tread on air. His heart beat wildly with rapture, and he felt that, from whatever cause the estrangement that had embittered so many months of his life might have proceeded, it was now for ever removed, and Louisa—his dearly-beloved, his beautiful Louisa, would soon be his own. He had no eyes, no ears, save for her; and Lord and Lady Rochampton, and Mrs. Sydney, who frequently glanced at him and his companion, marked with pleasure his animated and happy face.

"You will permit me to go to Lady Donnington's early to-morrow, will you not, dearest?" asked the joyful lover. "I have a thousand things to say to you."

"And I, Henry, long to tell you how much I have wronged you, and how I now repent it."

Never was a good dinner done such injustice to as the Duke of Nevillecourt's by Louisa Sydney and Strathern. To conceal their emotions, they affected to eat, but they were too much excited to retain any appetite, and suffered their plates to be removed without even being conscious of what dainties had been upon them.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room, Louisa Sydney, with great timidity, approached Lady Rochampton. "I feel that I have many apologies to offer your ladyship," said she, assuming one of her sweetest smiles, "for my apparent ingratitude and rudeness, when you so kindly lent your assistance to restore me to life, at the Lake of Como. Pray pardon me. I was then very unhappy, had been suffering great anxiety and wretchedness, and hardly knew what I did. Be generous, and extend to me your forgiveness;" and she held out her hand to Lady Rochampton; who, clasping it within her own, replied,

"Ah! dear Miss Sydney, I will forgive you every-

thing, if you promise to atone to the best and dearest friend my husband and I possess, for all the unhappiness you made him suffer there. If you had but witnessed it, as we did, you would acknowledge that he is as true and devoted a lover, as we have proved him to be a friend."

A conversation commenced in so confidential a strain, soon led to a perfect understanding between these two charming women. Both highminded, and of what is called a romantic turn, each quickly comprehended the feelings of the other, and felt spring up in her heart the seeds of a friendship, which it only required time to ripen and bring to maturity. When the gentlemen joined the ladies, and Strathern counted the moments until they had done so, he was delighted to find his adored Louisa conversing with Lady Roehampton in as friendly and cordial a manner as if they had been old and dear friends. Lord Roehampton came up to his wife, who immediately presented him to Miss Sydney, to whom he evinced much less attention than the marchioness could have wished; and, seeing that Louisa was now engrossed by Strathern, she whispered in her husband's ear. "Miss Sydney is a delightful person, and I am charmed with her."

"Ay, that's your way, Mary, always ready to think favourably of every one; but I can't so easily

forgive or forget all the unhappiness she caused the best fellow in the whole world, and the truest friend."

"She has told me that she was then very wretched, dearest."

"I don't know how that may be, but I'll swear she deserved to be so, for tormenting the noblest creature that ever lived."

"Pray oblige me, and don't look so stern," said Lady Roehampton, laying her little white hand on her lord's arm. "Indeed you must like her, dearest, for I already feel towards her as we ought towards one who will, I am convinced, soon be the wife of our best friend."

"You do with me just as you will, Mary; so, I suppose, whether I like it or not, I must become pleased with your new friend."

"Miss Sydney, as you have extended your kindness to *me*, I must ask you to forget that my husband is only a new acquaintance," said Lady Roehampton, turning to Louisa, who was in earnest conversation with her lover.

Strathern looked so happy, that Lord Roehampton, justly attributing the change to the good understanding which was now so apparent between his friend and her, observed, that "Miss Sydney possessed such a wonderful power in metamorphosing gloomy mortals into joyous ones;" and he smilingly pointed at

Strathern, "that he almost feared to trust himself near so dangerous a person."

"I never before suspected that *you* were gloomy," replied Strathern; "but, if you were, you must admit the metamorphose would be a very desirable one."

"I was gloomy enough in Italy when I saw you almost ready to hang yourself," observed Lord Roehampton, somewhat spitefully; "and I don't think that even the power of an enchantress could have then rendered me gay."

This artless speech, proving so well the unhappiness she had inflicted on her lover, would have touched Louisa Sydney, had he even been culpable to the extent which she had formerly believed; but knowing, as she now did, his perfect freedom from any sin towards love or her, it melted her feelings towards him so much that tears started to her beautiful eyes.

Strathern longed to chase them away with his lips; and Lady Rochampton, with womanly sweetness, pressed the hand of her new friend as she whispered, "You must pardon my husband; he thinks so highly of Mr. Strathern, that he cannot bear that he should even be suspected of doing wrong."

"Ay, I see that I shall be as fascinated as my wife and Strathern are," observed the marquis, touched by the tearful eyes of Miss Sydney; "so I yield at once to the power of this fair lady," bowing to Louisa,

"and solicit the favour of touching the hand that wields so easily the wand of enchantment."

Louisa extended her hand to him with unaffected cordiality, and he pressed it to his lips.

Mrs. Sydney, who had watched all that was passing in the little circle in which she took so deep an interest, now joined it; and Lord Roehampton, pleased to discover in her an intimate friend of the dear mother whose memory he so fondly cherished, pressed her and her daughter to pay Lady Roehampton a visit.

"I hardly dare believe in my present felicity," said Strathern to Mrs. Sydney. "I once before thought myself on the brink of happiness, when a change I could never account for, and which I felt conscious I had not deserved, rendered me the most miserable of men. May I, dear madam, once more indulge the hope that the happiness I now feel will be permanent, and that it will be followed by still greater felicity?"

"We have much to blame ourselves for, dear Mr. Strathern," was the reply, "and you have much to forgive. We ought never to have doubted you, or, if appearances could justify doubt, we ought to have frankly told you our suspicions. That fatal evening, for so I must consider it from the sufferings it entailed on my child, that you left us to dine with your friend, Lord Delmington, we walked in the Coliseum, and,

while concealed from observation in the deep shade of one of the entrances, we saw you *tête-à-tête* with a lady of surpassing beauty. We saw you gaze on her face, heard her ask if she might rely on you, and heard you pledge yourself to be faithful. The most terrible suspicion took possession of our minds. Louisa's wretchedness I cannot describe. In vain I urged her to let me tell you what we had seen and heard, and our consequent anxiety. She would not permit it; and insisted that if there was nothing wrong, you would, when you came the next day, explain the circumstance which had so much alarmed and grieved her. You did not, alas! refer to it, and this confirmed her fears.

"The next day, Mr. Rhymer came and told us that he met you *tête-à-tête* at St. Peter's with a beautiful person, to whom you refused to present him. This circumstance, coupled with your silence to us, left no doubt on our minds that the person with whom you were seen was not one whom you could name to us, and my daughter's state of mind became such that she implored me to leave Rome at once. After Mr. Rhymer's communication, she determined to see you no more. The morning we left Rome your appearance in the street at such an hour, and in the dress of the preceding evening, all, all tended to confirm the terrible suspicion we had formed. Then the

meeting you at Como, accompanied by the same lady, gave the last touch to my daughter's despair. Severely has she suffered; and if you feel, as I confess you have reason to do, offended at our unjust suspicions and want of candour in avowing them to you, remember that your own conduct in concealing from us the name of the lady with whom you were seen, gave rise to them."

"You are right; yes, I see it all now. I ought not to have accepted the confidence of my friend, Delmington, without his permission to extend it to my affianced wife. Oh! how much unhappiness might we have been saved had you, dear Mrs. Sydney, told me that you had seen me at the Coliseum, for I should then have solicited Delmington's leave to confide in you! He was then so ill, that I almost despaired of his recovery. He asked me to give my arm to his wife at the Coliseum, and at St. Peter's, while he remained at the entrance to both places in his carriage. That evening he broke a blood-vessel in the chest; I had sat up all night with him, and was returning home on that morning when I saw you leaving Rome. He continued so ill, that I acceded to his request to accompany them to Como."

"Where you saved my child's life!" added Mrs. Sydney. "Oh! how ungrateful, how lost to all feeling, you must have thought us!"

"Heaven be thanked! all misunderstandings are now over, and for ever," said Strathern, "and I am again restored to happiness. Will you, my dear madam, in consideration of all I have suffered, use your influence with my adored Louisa to induce her to consent to be mine with as little delay as possible? Remember that, when the misunderstanding which prevented our union took place, I was to have had the felicity of leading her to the altar when we reached England. Promise me that you will now induce her to abridge my probation, and bless me with her hand as soon as the settlements can be drawn."

"I promise," replied Mrs. Sydney; "for we owe you a reparation for our unjust suspicions."

Sweet were the tears shed that night by Louisa Sydney on the bosom of her fond mother, ere she retired to her pillow. "Had I but followed your advice, how much wretchedness should we all have been saved! You were less unjust to him than I was, and wished, by informing him of our having seen him at the Coliseum, to give him an opportunity of explaining his presence there. But I, self-willed and obstinate, refused to be governed by your better judgment, and have merited the sufferings I have endured. But he, conscious of his own innocence, how cruel was his position, and how faithfully must he have loved me when his attachment could have resisted the con-

tumely and harshness he experienced at my hands! Never, never can I sufficiently atone to him for it!"

"There is one way, my dear Louisa, of doing this. Consent to be his at once."

"You, dearest mother, shall henceforth guide your child. This hand is yours to bestow when you wish it;" and the blushing girl placed her small white hand in that of her parent. "I hardly dared to look at the sweet, innocent face of Lady Rochampton this evening," said Miss Sydney, "after having wronged her by my insulting suspicions. I would not for worlds that she should know I ever had entertained them. And dear Henry!—how good, how noble of him to pardon my injustice!"

Peaceful were the slumbers, and happy were the dreams, of both mother and daughter that night, and glad was the awaking to the certainty that all misunderstandings were now over for ever.

In six weeks from that happy day of reconciliation, Strathern led Louisa Sydney to the hymeneal altar, in the presence of the Marquis and Marchioness of Rochampton; and the happy couple set off for Sydney Park, to spend the honeymoon, in compliance with the desire of the bride.

They have now been three years married, and are the parents of two beautiful boys, on whom Mrs. Sydney doats with all a grandmother's fondness. Stra-

thern House had been two years completed, and the fine taste of its decorations and its furniture accord well with the treasures of art which it contains. Happy in their domestic circle, and diffusing happiness around them, their past trials and disappointments are only now remembered to enhance present felicity; and when their splendid mansion is opened to give some brilliant *fête*, it is allowed, by all those who attend it, with one solitary exception, that the parties at Strathern House surpass all others. The exception is Mr. Rhymer, who prefers the *fêtes* of some two or three dukes of his acquaintance.

THE END.

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